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Opera in 'The Donizettian Dark Ages'

Management, Competition and Artistic Policy in London, 1861-70

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Dissertation submitted for the Ph.D. degree in Historical Musicology

King's College, University of London

1996.



Abstract

Opera in 'The Donizettian Dark Ages' seeks to explain the development of opera repertoire in mid-nineteenth-century London through an examination of institutional and industrial context. Frederick Gye and James Henry Mapleson, managers of the Royal Italian Opera and Her Majesty's Theatre during the 1860s, have been dismissed for their dependence upon dated Italian operas instead of contemporary repertoire. The view that they lacked artistic integrity is unfair; each impresario followed an explicit policy to introduce new works to the London public. My study addresses the factors which led to a discrepancy between policy and practice. The lack of suitable venues for opera in London provoked a continuous string of operational and financial crises for the managers. A cumbersome process for securing performance rights, conservative aesthetics and the programming of the rival house each played a role in delimiting the number and type of new operas the managers considered importing to London. Production economics and the vicissitudes of rehearsals then determined whether or not an imported work actually appeared. Perhaps most influential, the hegemony of a star class of singers held direct implications for the size of the company and the strategic scheduling of certain operas within and across seasons. In sum, this study engages with the material forces which guided the ascent of repertory programming at one of the leading centres for Italian opera. A second theme addresses managers' attempts to restructure their institutions in ways which allowed them to circumvent the unappealing economics and programming constrictions associated with competition. A final chapter examines one such solution, an opera monopoly, and considers why it could not succeed. Throughout, this history of the Gye-Mapleson rivalry draws upon a range of newly discovered sources, most notably a complete collection of Frederick Gye's diaries.

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Preface

The extensive use of a new archival resource, and one as stylistically inconsistent as Frederick Gye's collection of journals as manager of the Royal Italian Opera, demands a clear statement of editorial policy. My approach seeks foremost to impart a sense of the diaries' characteristic flow and style. Entries cited will retain Gye's spelling, punctuation, capitalization and method of emphasis but omit his deletions unless these illuminate a certain point. Abbreviations such as 'w^d' ('would') are written in full. Numbers with four digits are given with a comma, consistent with figures provided elsewhere in the study. Gye used dashes instead of periods to separate his sentences and my transcriptions retain these. However, to enhance legibility, I have used a single dash (-) to denote sentence breaks and a double dash (--) to indicate an em-dash, a continuation of thought. Occasionally, I have added punctuation and forenames for the sake of clarity.

Since the titling of operas performed in Italian in mid-nineteenth-century London was never consistent, it too demands specific editorial guidelines. Most French and German operas received Italian names; for example, *Les Huguenots* became *Gli Ugonotti*. Sometimes the two opera managers, Gye and James Henry Mapleson, assigned different names to the same opera. Thus, Her Majesty's Opera performed *Faust* (not translated into *Fausto* as at some continental Italian theatres) and the Royal Italian Opera gave *Faust et Marguerita*.⁶¹⁴ Nevertheless, managers' announcements and critics' notices alternated the original and Italian titles indiscriminately, even within the space of a single prospectus or review. In this study, references to operas give titles in the original language. Allusions to a specific performance of an Italian version give the translated title in parentheses if substantially different from the original. Since several chapters include the names of many operas, the first reference uses a full title (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*) but for the sake of concision, subsequent references use an abbreviated title (*Il barbiere*) and long lists of operas drop the article (*Barbiere*). Obscure operas, however,

retain full titles throughout this study, as do any works which abridgement might confuse (*L'étoile du Nord* should not become *L'étoile*).

A further word is necessary regarding the nomenclature of the theatre located at the Covent Garden site. As a playhouse in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, the theatre was known as the 'Theatre Royal, Covent Garden.' After its conversion to an Italian opera house in 1846, the term 'Royal Italian Opera' referred to both the opera company and the opera house located in Covent Garden. For the 1860s, therefore, 'Royal Italian Opera' is appropriate for any references to the theatre's general use or specific use for Gye's Italian opera activities, but 'Covent Garden Theatre' should be used for performances given by other opera or concert presenters outside of the London season. The familiar pseudonym 'Covent Garden' should be avoided in scholarly writing about this period, but has become so common that it would be pedantic to belabour the point. It is worthwhile to note that even today, the correct term is 'The Royal Opera House,' not 'Covent Garden.'

A thesis of this nature and duration incurs many debts. I am grateful to the British Marshall Commemoration Commission for supporting me in my course of study. Curtis Price deserves thanks for supervising my research and writing, even during his transition to the principalship of the Royal Academy of Music. Irena Auerbach, Secretary to the Music Department at King's College, has provided heroic support.

The Royal Opera House Archives has granted extensive access to the Frederick Gye Diary Collection and many other unexplored primary materials. Archivist Francesca Franchi and her associates were generous and hospitable during my many months of work there. I am also grateful to members of the senior management of the Royal Opera House, who have given me substantial amounts of their time and provided unique opportunities for me to learn about the challenges facing opera administrators today. Jeremy Isaacs, Nicholas Payne, Peter Katona, John Harrison, Clive Timms, David Pilcher, Keith Cooper and his assistant Siri Fischer-Hansen deserve special mention.

Barbara Peters and Tracy Earl of Coutts & Co. Archives and Josephine Horner of Barclay's Records Services have shared expertise of their companies' records. Alfred,

Peter and William Mapleson were generous in allowing me to review private family papers and memorabilia. My study has benefited enormously from working with Gabriella Dideriksen, a valued colleague. Our complementary interests and long collaboration continually served to challenge and enrich my individual work. Jennifer Hall provided me with useful information from her own Ph.D. research. Mark Everist has been helpful in the extreme throughout my work at King's College, and John Rosselli has shared his knowledge of this period with me. Finally, I am grateful to Joshua Ruxin and Melpomene Costopoulos for their editorial advice and unflagging encouragement.

Introduction

With characteristic thunder, George Bernard Shaw attacked the opera régimes of Frederick Gye and James Henry Mapleson: in his first column for *The World* in 1890, he lambasted the programming of the 1860s and 1870s and complained that Gye and Mapleson could never be 'fetched' from 'the Donizettian dark ages.'¹ This blow effectively consigned the managers to pariah status in the history of opera. As part of a broad attempt to reform managers' artistic conservatism in his own day, Shaw referred to their practice of presenting the public with an endless stream of the most familiar operas of previous eras: *Don Giovanni*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *La sonnambula* and *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Shaw's view of the Gye and Mapleson managements has prevailed until the present. The memoirs of only one other contemporary observer—Mapleson himself—and one formal history of the period—Harold Rosenthal's outdated *Two Centuries of Opera at Covent Garden*—have achieved as broad a readership as the famous critic.² *The Mapleson Memoirs*, full of pomp and bluster, cannot serve as an objective critical examination and Rosenthal essentially perpetuates Shaw's summary conclusion. A second reason this verdict has remained so long unchallenged is that it is essentially correct. The view that these managers assembled the most celebrated singers of the day but presented uninspired programmes and presided over 'the hopeless decay' of Italian opera is accurate.³ However, the implicit suggestion that this repertoire structure derived from the managers' lack of artistic integrity is reductive. Indeed, as a matter of policy, both managers purported to deliver new works and a varied repertoire to their

¹ George Bernard Shaw, *Music in London* (London: Constable and Company, 1934), 1:1.

² James Henry Mapleson, *The Mapleson Memoirs, 1848-1888*, 2 vols. (London: Remington, 1888); Reprint, ed. Harold Rosenthal (London: Putnam, 1966), hereafter cited as *MM*; Harold Rosenthal, *Two Centuries of Opera at Covent Garden* (London: Putnam and Company, 1958).

³ George Bernard Shaw, *The Star*, 20 September 1888, cited in *Shaw's Music*, ed. Dan H. Laurence (London: The Bodley Head, 1981), 1:524.

audiences. Frederick Gye claimed 'that I was always ready to give a new & good opera' and both managers reiterated annually in the prospectuses they issued before each season their policy of presenting the public with 'novelty'.⁴ The problem was that they could not. This study seeks to explain this discrepancy between artistic policy and artistic practice by locating repertoire developments in London within their institutional and industrial context. The Gye and Mapleson managements may have generated disappointing artistic records, but it is precisely this process of repertoire stagnation which makes this period interesting.

Perhaps influenced by Shaw's legacy, no scholar has yet examined mid-nineteenth century opera institutions and production in London thoroughly. Rosenthal's work remains useful as reference but relies too much on inaccurate, apocryphal sources. Like so many of the sugar-coated memoirs penned by critics, managers and performers—the only other published material available for this period—it retells familiar anecdotes about charlatan managers and *prime donne* and ultimately shuns analysis in favour of a sensationalized catalogue of great performances and performers.⁵ The concept of opera as industry has received considerably greater attention. The work of Lorenzo Bianconi and Thomas Walker, John Rosselli and William Holmes has built upon William Crosten's embryonic *French Grand Opera: An Art and a Business*.⁶ Their important, trenchant

⁴ Diary of Frederick Gye, 4 January 1877, Frederick Gye Diary Collection, Royal Opera House Archives (ROHA), London. All subsequent references to the diary collection will be indicated by the letters 'GD' and the date of entry.

⁵ See, for example, Henry Chorley, *Thirty Years Musical Recollections* (London: R. Born, 1862); Benjamin Lumley, *Reminiscences of the Opera* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1864); Maurice Strakosch, *Souvenirs d'un imprésario* (Paris: Paul Ollendorff, 1887); Charles Santley, *Student and Singer* (London: Edward Arnold, 1892); Luigi Arditi, *My Reminiscences* (London: Skeffington, 1897); Henry Saxe Wyndham, *The Annals of Covent Garden Theatre from 1732 to 1897*, 2 vols. (London: Chatto & Windus, 1906); Joseph Bennett, *Forty Years of Music: 1865-1905* (London: Methuen & Co., 1908); Herman Klein, *The Golden Age of Opera* (London: George Routledge, 1933).

⁶ Lorenzo Bianconi and Thomas Walker, 'Production, Consumption and Political Function of Seventeenth-Century Opera,' *Early Music History* 4 (1984), 209-96; John Rosselli, *The Opera Industry in Italy from Cimarosa to Verdi: The Role of the Impresario* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), hereafter cited as *Opera Industry*; Rosselli, 'The Opera Industry in Italy,' *Storia dell'opera italiana*, iv: *Il sistema produttivo e le sue competenze*, eds. Lorenzo Bianconi and Giorgio Pestelli (Turin: EDT/Musica, 1987); William C. Holmes, *Opera Observed: Views of a Florentine Impresario in the Early Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); and William Crosten, *French Grand Opera: An Art and a Business* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1948).

studies have done much to provide detail on particular opera systems and to advocate a powerful historiographical premise: that an art form can be best understood when contextualized within the industry and the complex of business and social relationships which support it. The recent *Italian Opera in Late Eighteenth-Century London* by Curtis Price, Judith Milhous and Robert Hume stands as the first work to delineate in detail the link between industry context, repertoire and performance—the tangible product and, along with the elusive promise of financial reward, the *raison d'être* of the opera industry.⁷ The study attempts to synthesize diverse elements of opera management with formal analysis of the works commissioned and presented. My thesis will contribute to this historiographical evolution in a different way. In explaining the development of programming in mid-nineteenth-century London, it examines both broad institutional developments and the minute, day-to-day concerns of opera managers.

The discovery of several important primary sources enables a close analysis of opera as a business. Foremost is a nearly complete collection in forty-eight volumes of Frederick Gye's diaries. Spanning the period 1841-78, the diaries provide a rare view of opera management, and bring into focus the economic, artistic and social relationships that comprised the opera system in London.⁸ Gye wrote in his diary virtually every day and typically recorded financial transactions with business associates, negotiations for

⁷ Curtis Price, Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, *Italian Opera in Late Eighteenth-Century London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

⁸ The diaries are the property of Gye's descendants and are now on loan to the Royal Opera House Archives. The collection includes thirty-four annual diaries for Gye's London-based activities, usually with one day's entry per page. Fourteen smaller travel diaries combine years and have no set pattern for entries. Eleven diaries are missing, seven of them travel diaries; the diary for 1847 is in the Theatre Museum, London. Lacunae include the 1844, 1845, 1876 and 1878 home diaries, and the 1867-73 travel diaries. The ROHA collection also includes two diaries (1878-79) of the son (Ernest) who succeeded Gye in the management of Covent Garden, and fifty-six diaries (1860-1927, with omissions) of his daughter (Clara), who assumed secretarial responsibilities for her father in his later years. My article with Gabriella Dideriksen ('Frederick Gye and "The Dreadful Business of Opera Management,"' *19th-Century Music* [Summer 1995]) introduced the diaries and Gye's management to the public. I wish to thank the editors of *19th-Century Music* and Gabriella Dideriksen for permission to reproduce parts of that article in this thesis.

singers and for performance rights, and reactions to performances.⁹ The thirteen travel diaries in the collection are particularly rich, since they describe Gye's annual scouting missions to continental houses; the following entry, his first encounter with Meyerbeer's *L'africaine* at the Paris Opéra in 1865, is typical:

[W]ent to the Opera and saw the 3rd representation of Meyerbeer's posthumous opera-- *L'Africaine* - I was at Berlin in January 1851 & saw Meyerbeer there - he then promised me that I should have for the season of 1852 this very opera-- so that he has been looking forward to his production for 14 years at least! - The reason given for this delay has been that Meyerbeer never could [find] artistes to sing it at the French Opera with the necessary qualifications but after hearing the opera last night my opinion is that Meyerbeer must have his own misgivings as to its success - It is very difficult to judge after one hearing of an opera but it appeared to me that altho' there are some beautiful effects there are not the elements of permanent public success in the *Africaine* - [Jean-Baptiste] Faure did all he could with a bad part - Madlle [Marie] Saxe all she could with a better, but [Emilio] Naudin notwithstanding he sang for the first time in French carried off 'Les honneurs de la Soirée' - The opera began at 7.20 & finished at 12.30-- so to be done at RIO between 8:30 & 12 it must be tremendously cut!¹⁰

Gye's diligence and precision in writing coupled with his earnest, engaging style render the diaries one of the nineteenth century's most vivid accounts of opera from a manager's perspective.¹¹ Other newly discovered records verify Gye's remarkable candor and accuracy as a diarist and are useful in their own right. These sources include a complete set of financial records for the 'Frederick Gye Royal Italian Opera Account' in the archives of Coutts & Co., and several Chancery lawsuits located in the Public Record

⁹ Gye missed entries or wrote tersely only during protracted illnesses, shooting vacations and the Sundays he spent with his family. Annotated bookmarks and marginalia throughout the diaries suggest that he viewed these volumes as reliable business references to inform later discussions and negotiations.

¹⁰ GD, 3 May 1865. Faure sang Nélusko, Sasse created Séluka and Naudin was the Vasco da Gama.

¹¹ Wyndham wrote in 1906, 'Until the voluminous diaries and memoirs left by the famous *impresario* are published, the inner history of The Royal Italian Opera, Covent Garden, under his rule is not likely to become known' (1:193). A critical edition of the diary collection has recently been proposed.

Office.¹² The Royal Opera House Archives also preserves singer and conductor contracts and correspondence, as well as an enormous, uncatalogued collection of performance materials used during this period.¹³

These sources enable one to understand Gye's programming as it related to his finances, his construction of a new theatre and his negotiations with composers, singers and the ticket trade. For Mapleson, such detailed historiography is more difficult, for he does not seem to have left behind copious accounts of his daily activities. Given this imbalance of source material, Gye is naturally the focus of this study, but enough material survives for Mapleson to enable extensive comparisons. *The Mapleson Memoirs* provide some support in reconstructing details of his management, as do many accounts in Gye's diaries.¹⁴ Negotiations for singers or venues associated with Mapleson's management appear throughout the collection. At other times, Gye recorded rumours circulating about his rival, although such reports need to be viewed with circumspection. The three years in which the managers planned and operated their coalition (1868-70) afford direct insight into Mapleson's practices. An eclectic range of new material concerning Mapleson has also emerged over the course of research. This includes bank correspondence, financial records and inventories in the archives of Barclay's Bank near Manchester; a stunning wealth of personal memorabilia literally pinned to the walls of a house owned by Mapleson's descendants in New York; and correspondence in the International Music Museum in Sydenham. Lawsuits and architectural plans in the Public Record Office as well as minutes of the Metropolitan Board of Works in the Greater London Record Office provide further information. Finally, prospectuses, reviews and

¹² I wish to thank Coutts & Co. and the Gye and Mapleson families for permission to reproduce financial records from the managers' bank accounts.

¹³ These exciting musical materials will serve as the focus of future research into performance practice during this period but will only be touched upon briefly in this study of institutional influences on opera programming.

¹⁴ Mapleson specifically eschewed such a detailed account: 'Figures are dull and statistics fatiguing; or I might be tempted to give the reader particulars as to the number of miles that I have travelled, the sums of money I have received and spent during my career as manager; with other details of a like character' (*MM*, 310).

daily advertisements in *The Times* have enabled me to construct a database of Italian opera performance in London for the period 1861 to 1878. This resource lists dates of announcements and performances; where possible, it also tracks changes to the schedule, reasons for changes and box-office receipts. The database is particularly helpful in synthesizing the various Mapleson sources into a cohesive portrait of his management and activities.

Given the richness of this material, the boundary years which define this study may appear puzzling. Why these particular years when, after all, they neither take in the full measure of Frederick Gye's tenure as Director of the Royal Italian Opera (1848-78), nor, indeed, cover the entire period during which the particular institutions and programming policies central to my concerns dominated the opera industry in London (1847-92)? Both projects are important and should be the focus of future work, but a more finite span of time facilitates treatment of the subject with the detail it demands. The period 1861 to 1870 emerges as a particularly rich and representative sample, for it encompasses events and themes typical of those which coloured this entire 45-year period. Specifically, this era encapsulates the beginning of the rivalry between Gye and Mapleson—Gye at the Royal Italian Opera and Mapleson alternately at the Lyceum, Her Majesty's Theatre and Drury Lane—their two seasons of partnership (1869-70), and a return to competition.¹⁵ These boundary years were important milestones in the operatic life of London for other reasons. The year 1861 proved an important transition for operatic affairs as it was Giulia Grisi's farewell and Adelina Patti's début season. Queen Victoria withdrew from the theatres after the death of the Prince Consort, an event with significant implications for opera managers' relationships with royalty. It was also the year in which Gye became entangled in a lawsuit which lasted eleven years and directly affected his attitude towards management. In the last year of the study, the two impresarios abandoned their thoughts of monopoly and turned to new solutions to

¹⁵ As part of this project, I have completed all the research to extend the study through 1878—the year Gye died and Mapleson turned his attention towards America. These later years introduce new issues which warrant thorough treatment and would extend the thesis well beyond the prescribed length. A future project will address these years with the same level of detail as I give the 1860s here.

survive the injurious pressures and economics of competition. While the Gye-Mapleson rivalry persevered another eight years and the programming principles and the institutions they defined continued another twenty, the year 1870 marked the end of a distinctly competitive and colourful era.

Most important, this decade highlights the interplay of two themes that characterized opera in London between 1847 and 1892: the entrenchment of repertory opera and the search for a model of institutional organization favourable to programming and profitability. The shift from the presentation of new operas to the revival of popular, established works constitutes one of the most fundamental transformations in opera history. Musicologists and theatre historians commonly allude to this transition, yet none has carefully examined how this practice grew out of the conflation of economic, political and artistic developments in the mid-nineteenth century. This model of programming was already in place by the time the Gye-Mapleson rivalry began. Nevertheless, the specific developments of the 1860s force critical questions concerning the interconnections between the structure of the opera industry, the management of an opera company and the programming of repertoire, relationships fundamental to the development of the art form. In a period which suffered from a slowdown in the production of works in popular styles—in England the Italian *opera seria* and *buffa* and French *grand opéra*—but enjoyed considerable output of more marginal forms, what options were available to managers who needed to produce new works? What artistic policies and what forms of institutional organization enabled opera managers in London to attract an audience and stay solvent? How did they come to choose these particular strategies—or, given the various pressures inherent to managing an opera concern in a competitive environment, did they even have opportunity to choose at all? What prompted the establishment of an opera monopoly and how did this new form of organization influence the development of opera as an art form? In addition to documenting the Gye and Mapleson régimes with an unprecedented level of detail, this study will explore the dynamics between management, competition and artistic policy within the opera system of mid-nineteenth-century London.

The structure of my thesis reflects this dual mandate, embedding detailed analyses of different aspects of the opera industry within an overarching chronological framework. Chapter 1 provides a profile of the two impresarios, Gye and Mapleson, and outlines the structure of the opera industry with a specific focus on the issues of competition and monopoly. A second introductory chapter establishes the musical context of this period more fully. It discusses challenges to the tradition of Italian opera performance that seemed to herald substantial programming changes for the 1860s. The chapter will conclude, however, with a close examination of the artistic records which Shaw would so revile: Gye and Mapleson's frozen repertoire. The next three chapters focus specifically on the period 1861-67 and address the key components of opera management which influenced these programming patterns. Chapter 3 treats the two foremost challenges to opera managers during this period: the need for a suitable theatre and the struggle to stay solvent. It illustrates that, in this competitive environment, opera alone could barely yield profits. The finances involved with new theatre construction and itinerancy mandated that both impresarios develop additional ways to generate income, concerns which distracted them from artistic matters. In chapter 4, the study turns to the cumbersome procedure the impresarios faced in importing new works to London. Here, the managers' aesthetics are explored, as are the international copyright conventions and rehearsal practices which further deterred the presentation of new work. Chapter 5 examines the changing balance of power between the impresario and his singers. A burgeoning international star system enabled leading singers to exact increasingly attractive salaries and guarantees concerning roles and the scope of their activities. These demands catalyzed changes to the size of the impresario's troupe, with substantial implications for the choice and schedule of operas presented. Chapter 6 examines one of the most turbulent and least understood eras of opera in London (1868-70): the years Mapleson and Gye combined their interests to forge an opera monopoly. It was long hoped that under such an arrangement, an impresario could realize unprecedented profit and act free from the operational and programmatic constraints associated with competition. This chapter will examine why a monopoly in London at this time could not fulfill these

expectations nor succeed in blocking new competitors. An afterword will project this history into the 1870s and extrapolate its implications for opera in London in subsequent eras.

Part 1

An Overview of Italian Opera in Mid-Nineteenth-Century London

Chapter 1

The Opera Industry

The Griffin and the Colonel

The development of opera in London in the second half of the nineteenth century is, in essence, the story of Frederick Gye (1810-78) and James Henry Mapleson (1830-1901). As two of the longest reigning opera managers in the history of London, and as individual business proprietors, Gye and Mapleson impressed powerful and lasting personal stamps upon the institutions they controlled and the repertoire they chose to present. Each brought a distinct set of experiences and characteristics to his venture. When Frederick Gye became Director of the Royal Italian Opera in 1848, he already enjoyed a strong reputation among theatre professionals in London, having succeeded his father as proprietor of the Vauxhall Gardens and having managed promenade concerts at Covent Garden and English opera seasons at Drury Lane for Louis Jullien. In supervising all financial and administrative matters of these undertakings, Gye developed considerable business acumen. He also sharpened a theatrical sensibility and an ability to spot talent which compensated for his relative lack of musical sophistication.

Temperamentally, Gye combined hard-nosed practicality with an entrepreneurial flair. An amateur inventor, he converted several innovative designs into successful commercial products, including lighting for the new Houses of Parliament, gas fittings, and, one month before his death, a new hydrogen-electric light with which he proposed to illuminate the opera house.¹ Gye was the consummate Victorian man of business in that his commercial and personal concerns intertwined indivisibly, and an ethos of market

¹ Gye was taken seriously for his scientific acumen, even by such an authority as Michael Faraday (GD, 21 February 1861). Gye also took an early interest in photography, for which he tried to develop new commercial applications. The 'F. Gye Sketch Book' in the diary collection shows some early inventions. For Gye's involvement with the Houses of Parliament, see GD, 3 April, 27-30 October 1862; see also Ralph de Rohan draft letter to A. Inghon, 1958, inserted into the Gye travel diary 1874-75.

rationalism and efficiency coloured all his activities. A diary account of one of his numerous hunting excursions in December 1868 provides an unlikely but excellent example of this distinctive world view:

[Hunter]	Killed	Missed	Percentage of killed
Dilwynn	110	56	66.26
Vivian	187	70	72.76
R. Crawshay	54	no account	
W. Crawshay	88	30	74.57
Halford	76	55	58.01
Berrington	142	72	66.35
F. G.	115	34	77.10

....My cold was so bad & I was so weak that I was far from being in shooting trim, besides this I did not at first know that a second barrel was counted as a miss-- that is both barrels were counted as 2 misses, & a bird wounded with the first barrel and killed with the second is counted as 1 miss and 1 hit - besides this it was almost dark while we shot the last beat & I missed 6 or 7 rabbits - still my percentage of hits to my number of shots was the best of the party.²

As in sport, so in business: Gye was prudent and economical in his undertakings, meticulous and exacting in his communication, fiercely competitive, proud of his accomplishments—and always in search of a good excuse to explain shortcomings. Gye's diaries convey further the image of a manager whose sense of honour and propriety ran so strong that he often stood stubbornly on principle. Ever self-righteous, Gye often saw himself as a victim, hostage to the adversaries, colleagues and singers who, he believed, schemed relentlessly against him; at the same time, he seemed to revel in fighting all such challenges, real and imagined. Contemporary observations support these views of his character. The impresario Maurice Strakosch, for example, extolled, 'M. Frederick Gye doit être cité comme le modèle des directeurs des compagnies italiennes qui se sont succédé à Londres. Il était un peu rude de formes [*sic*], très autoritaire, mais

² GD, 22 December 1868.

esclave de sa parole qui valait tous les écrits et sa signature.³ Charles Lamb Kenney, the author, librettist and renowned wit, penned the following:

There was an old manager, Gye,
Who on the main chance kept an eye.
If with him you would trade,
A sure fortune was made,-
Not yours, but that of old Gye!⁴

It was appropriate that the heraldic symbol of Gye's home, 'Springfield,' was the griffin. Known for its acute hearing, watchfulness over its riches and preparedness for battle, the mythic beast shared several traits with the competitive and financially adroit opera manager.⁵

In contrast to Gye's measured, business-like mien, Mapleson was the archetypal impresario. His *Memoirs*, Gye's diaries and private correspondence pass down the image of a self-glorifying, free-spending sensationalist: 'I shall reappear next season as the Krupp of the operatic field and simply annihilate the whole concern with the eighty ton guns I shall import for the purpose,' he declared.⁶ Bluff, mercurial and, at times, duplicitous, Mapleson had more of a traditional preparation for opera management than Gye.⁷ Having studied the violin at the Royal Academy of Music, he played in the opera orchestras at the Royal Italian Opera and Her Majesty's Theatre until he decided 'to quit

³ 'M. Frederick Gye must be cited as the model for all the directors of Italian opera companies in London who succeeded him. He was a little crude, very authoritarian, but a slave to his word which carried the same weight as his contracts and signature' (Strakosch, 28).

⁴ Cited in Bennett, 184.

⁵ The griffin appears on several letters from Gye to Michael Costa from Springfield, Collection of Michael Costa Papers, ROHA (hereafter cited as MC papers). For descriptions of the griffin, see *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (New York: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1910), 11:596 and Stephen Friar, *A New Dictionary of Heraldry* (London: A & C Black, 1987), 173.

⁶ *The New York Herald*, 24 April 1883, cited in John Frederick Cone, *First Rival of the Metropolitan Opera* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 14. Mapleson made the comment in a press conference before he assumed the management of the New York Academy of Music. Krupp was a contemporary German munitions manufacturer.

⁷ For the many possible routes into this profession, see Rosselli, *Opera Industry*, 19.

the comparative obscurity of the orchestra for a brilliant position on the stage.' Brilliant he was not. After three years of vocal training in Italy, he failed as a singer.⁸ Returning to London, he opened a musical agency in 1856 and then served as the deputy manager to E. T. Smith in seasons of 'Italian Opera for the People' at Drury Lane; it was perhaps this experience which nourished his populist sensibility. When Mapleson formed his own opera company in 1861, among his distinguishing strengths were enormous charisma and excellent relations with singers and other artistic personnel—indeed, so excellent that he was said to have intimate relations with some of his *prime donne*.⁹ He was fortunate that his charm served him so well, for his financial management was unsound.

Again, contemporary views support these impressions. His longtime conductor Luigi Arditi wrote in his *Reminiscences*,

I have known *prime donne* enter his office infuriatedly, vowing they would not depart from his presence without a 'little cheque,' or hard cash, and these same irate ladies would sally forth, after waiting his leisure for some considerable time, with their angry looks transformed to absolute serenity, and actually feeling, to all appearance, as though Mapleson were conferring a considerable favour upon them by continuing to owe them their hard-earned salaries. His manner was quite irresistible; there never lived the man whose suave, gentle art in charming the irrepressible creditor was more conspicuous or effective.... This was an art in itself; but a fact of far greater importance is that Mapleson was, unlike E. T. Smith, a Musician.¹⁰

⁸ *MM*, 13. Mapleson's decision to leave London for Italy was not motivated exclusively by his desire for a stage career. A private letter from his son years later revealed, 'he went to Italy to study seriously the bel canto at the age of 19, having married my mother, an heiress, who ran away from school to marry him at the age of 17 & which created a great sensation & my father found Italy a safer place than London would have proved to be where all kinds of things were threatened by his young wife's parents' (Henry Mapleson letter to Richard Northcott, 20 August 1925, James Henry Mapleson Papers, International Music Museum, Sydenham). The marriage itself was not the only 'great sensation': Mapleson's wife, Marian Raper, was several months pregnant at the time. According to John Rosselli, the claim of 'heiress' was likely a story Mapleson passed down to his family, for Raper's father was a Shoreditch butcher (personal correspondence with the author, November 1995).

⁹ An affair between Mapleson and Thérèse Tietjens was frequently reported to Gye (see, for example, *GD*, 15 May 1863 and 13 April 1864). John Rosselli has suggested that Mapleson later married Marie Roze, long believed to be the wife of the impresario's son.

¹⁰ Arditi, 89.

Explicit comparisons between Gye and Mapleson are few, but the music critic Joseph Bennett accurately encapsulated the difference in their working methods: 'Mapleson was never, like his rival, Gye, an able strategist, anticipating events and scheming to master them; but as a tactician, working amid the stress of actual conflict, he was pretty hard to beat.'¹¹ Whereas Gye, the more senior and respected of the two, managed a tightly organized venture, Mapleson seemed continually to scrape together enough money, resources and goodwill to mount potent opposition. Along these lines, perhaps the most direct insight into Mapleson's character is through the title by which he was known then and thereafter: the 'Colonel.' The name evokes the image of an indefatigable trooper—not of the highest rank, but committed to a spirited fight. True to form, the distinction was something of a sham, for although Mapleson actively promoted this image of himself, his military claims ran only so far as his participation in the Tower Hamlets Rifle Brigade and the Honourable Artillery Company—volunteer associations which engaged in weekend war games. Joseph Bennett, who served in his regiment, reported that Mapleson 'loved to hear his own voice; he revelled in the thunder and the shouting. It was especially good to see him riding through a London street at the head of his regiment, when, truly, he made a brave show, and knew it.'¹² The competition between these two incongruous personalities, the griffin and the colonel, would shape the trajectory of opera in London for the entire second half of the nineteenth century.

The Roots of Opera Competition

The battle between two Italian opera houses was not without precedent in London. From 1733 to 1737, the Opera of the Nobility (first at the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre and, from 1734, at the King's Theatre) fought Handel's 'Second Academy' (at the King's

¹¹ Joseph Bennett, cited in Klein, *Golden Age of Opera*, 46.

¹² Bennett, 189.

and then at Covent Garden). The early 1790s witnessed a short-lived rivalry between the rebuilt King's Theatre and the Pantheon. In both cases, although the competitors presented their own newly commissioned operas, they performed on the same nights and direct competition between two Italian opera houses proved ruinous.¹³ Since that time, the King's (later Her Majesty's) Theatre served as the premier and, usually, the only Italian opera house in London. This was not a monopoly secured by royal patent or by Lord Chamberlain's decree; it was merely a matter of custom.¹⁴

The rebirth of competition in the mid-nineteenth century originated in the artistic and institutional upheavals of the 1840s. Benjamin Lumley assumed the management of Her Majesty's Theatre in 1841 and began a streak of unopposed success with the operas of Rossini, Bellini and Donizetti featuring leading singers such as Giulia Grisi, Giovanni Mario, Fanny Persiani and Antonio Tamburini. At this time, the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, as one of two patent theatres with a monopoly over legitimate drama, presented a diverse range of entertainments, including spoken drama, pantomime and opera performed primarily in English. Encumbered by severe debt, the management changed hands regularly, as did the orientation of the programme.¹⁵ The passage of a new 'Act for Regulating Theatres' in 1843 undermined the theatre's monopoly status, for it empowered the Lord Chamberlain to grant annual licenses to minor theatres for all forms of stage performance.¹⁶ These developments resulted in the temporary demise of Covent Garden as a venue for performance.

In 1845, the music critic Charles Gruneisen began to campaign for the establishment of a second Italian opera house. He claimed Lumley's virtual monopoly promoted artistic

¹³ 'London,' *New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1992), 3:5-11 (cited hereafter as *New Grove Opera*); Price, Milhous and Hume, *Italian Opera*, 547 ff.

¹⁴ Price, Milhous and Hume, *Italian Opera*, 6-8. The lessees of Her Majesty's needed to renew their license from the Lord Chamberlain each year.

¹⁵ See Gabriella Dideriksen, 'Repertory and Rivalry: Opera at the Second Covent Garden Theatre 1830-56' (Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, forthcoming).

¹⁶ 'Act for Regulating Theatres,' 6 & 7 Vict. c. 68, in W. N. M. Geary, *The Law of Theatres and Music-Halls, Including Contracts and Precedents of Contracts* (London: Stevens and Sons, 1885), 144-50.

torpor and discouraged the expansion of the repertoire beyond established Italian composers. A second company, he felt, could serve to 'extend the existing Italian repertoire and to widen the domain of art by the production of the masterpieces by the French and German masters, in short, to create an establishment which should combine the essential attributes of the Italian Theatre, the Grand Opéra, and Opéra Comique, at Paris, and the classic German opera houses.'¹⁷ A schism at Her Majesty's Theatre during the 1846 season led to the adoption of Gröneisen's plan. After years of poor relations, Lumley ostracized his leading singers and his conductor, Michael Costa, by limiting their concert performances outside of the theatre and by refusing to present an opera by the husband of soprano Fanny Persiani.¹⁸ Covent Garden provided the discontented artistes with an outlet and, the day after the 1846 season ended, Giuseppe Persiani took a lease from the proprietors of the theatre. Costa and the leading singers of Her Majesty's defected to establish the Royal Italian Opera under the management of Frederic Beale. Lumley continued to operate at Her Majesty's, and a change in management brought Gye to the Royal Italian Opera in 1848; within three years, he became sole lessee of the theatre.¹⁹

Once again, two Italian opera companies performed on the same nights and vied for the top singers of the day and the patronage of a limited audience. For the first time ever, though, the rivals presented a similar repertoire.²⁰ Doubts quickly arose as to whether Italian opera could thrive in such a fiercely competitive environment—an ironic view, given that a second company had appeared to be the only way the art form could improve after the abuses of monopoly. The subsequent three decades witnessed opera managers' desperate attempts, alternately hostile and collaborative, to reconstitute a

¹⁷ Cited in C. L. Gröneisen, *The Opera and the Press* (London: Robert Hardwicke, 1869), 6-7.

¹⁸ Willert Beale, *The Light of Other Days; Seen through the Wrong End of an Opera Glass* (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1890), 1:42-44.

¹⁹ See Dideriksen and Ringel, 5-6 for details of Gye's progression in the management of the company.

²⁰ For detailed accounts of the Gye-Lumley rivalry see Dideriksen and Ringel, 6-7 and 24-25 and Lumley, *Reminiscences*, 1864.

monopoly of Italian opera. In the years 1849 and 1851, for example, Gye and Lumley discussed a merger but could not agree. This was unfortunate for Lumley since, by all accounts, Gye's well-rounded ensembles and spectacular productions proved more appealing than Lumley's reliance on individual star performers.²¹ In 1852, financial difficulties overtook Lumley and a prominent supporter, Lord Ward, later Earl of Dudley, stepped forward to purchase the many encumbrances on the theatre.²² Thus, beginning in 1853, Gye enjoyed a monopoly that enabled him to consolidate the reputation of the Royal Italian Opera as the most prestigious opera venue in London. His success was cut short in 1856, the *annus horribilis* for English impresarios: Gye's theatre burned to the ground and Lumley was forced to assign his lease to Ward. As Gye oversaw the construction of the new Covent Garden Theatre, he presented opera for two seasons at the neighbouring Lyceum Theatre in Wellington Street, and moved to his new home in 1858. A sublease enabled Lumley to re-open Her Majesty's for the 1856 and 1857 seasons, but after a missed rent payment, Ward evicted him altogether.²³ The demise of Lumley hardly left the field open to Gye, since the theatrical manager E. T. Smith gave seasons of Italian opera at Her Majesty's and Drury Lane between 1858 and 1860.

As the 1861 opera season approached, Gye enjoyed new hope of re-establishing his monopoly. Smith was suffering severe financial difficulties and presented Gye with an opportunity to buy him out of the business:

²¹ Gröneisen, 11; Henry Chorley, *Thirty Years' Musical Recollections* (London: R. Bohn, 1862), 2:194.

²² William Ward (1817-85), heir to the first Earl of Dudley, received the earldom 17 February 1860 (*Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. 'Ward'). Allusions to him after this time will refer to 'Lord Dudley.'

²³ By 1856, Ward had purchased nearly every charge on the theatre and sought to secure his position. Since Lumley's lease prohibited him from mortgaging the theatre, his only alternative was to assign the lease to Lord Ward. For details of this transaction, see Benjamin Lumley, *The Earl of Dudley, Mr. Lumley and Her Majesty's Theatre: A Narrative of Facts Addressed to the Patrons of the Opera, His Friends, and the Public Generally* (London: Bosworth and Harrison, 1863), 6-7.

E.T.S. proposed to agree not to give either Italian or English opera [inserted: or any opera] either at Her Majesty's Theatre or Drury Lane the coming season-- that none of his Italian artistes should perform in London - for this I should pay him the sum of £3,000 - also that I might take any of his artistes I liked on his terms with them, or none - also that he would make the same arrangement for 1862 if I liked.²⁴

This was the arrangement that Gye had wanted to make with Lumley earlier and which he viewed as the key to financial success. He ultimately paid Smith £2,250 to refrain from giving Italian opera in 1861 and English opera until the end of February 1862.²⁵ He could have purchased the engagements of Smith's foremost stars, the soprano Thérèse Tietjens and the tenor Antonio Giuglini, but declined because he had already engaged enough singers for the season and Smith was asking too much money. Gye succeeded in relegating his rival from the opera business; however, in buying out Smith without also purchasing his assets, Gye essentially created a loophole for another individual to establish a second Italian opera company.

Mapleson was in an excellent position to do so. Through managing Smith's three Italian opera seasons, he had established relationships with Smith's singers and conductor, Luigi Arditi, now unemployed. Additionally, Mapleson's father operated a music library in Leicester Square and served as music librarian to Queen Victoria and at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane.²⁶ With artists and music so easy to obtain, Mapleson announced a short season of Italian opera at the Lyceum, the only opera house in London which was not in Gye's control. Had Mapleson been able to secure the Lyceum only two weeks earlier, the face of Italian opera in London over the next three decades—indeed, the hegemony of Covent Garden itself—would have been significantly altered. By all

²⁴ GD, 13 February 1861.

²⁵ GD, 14 February to 22 March 1861.

²⁶ A detailed history of this musical family appears in Appendix A.

accounts, Mapleson could have engaged a young soprano named Adelina Patti if he only had had a venue.²⁷

Industry Structure

The bold attempts of impresarios in mid-nineteenth century London to achieve monopoly belie the weak position they occupied within the opera industry. As is well known, impresarios are fundamentally dependent creatures, beholden to an array of individuals and parties for their livelihood.²⁸ As one contemporary raconteur, Willert Beale, described the local trade: '[The impresario] is the incarnation of unlimited liability. He is liable to the public, liable to the artists, liable to Government, liable to proprietors, liable, in short, to everything and everybody except himself.'²⁹ The balance of power between the impresario and other individuals, both within his enterprise and outside of it, shifted further away from the opera manager during the 1850s and 1860s. A structural analysis of this industry at the outset of the 1860s introduces the complex of relationships and pressures that shaped Gye and Mapleson's behaviour, and places in context the operational and artistic policies which subsequent chapters will examine further. This discussion first reviews the constitution of the revenue stream, audience and season for Italian opera. It then introduces the personnel within the opera companies and three major interest groups whose favour the managers had to obtain; namely, the ticket trade,

²⁷ Famously, Mapleson was responsible for bringing Patti to London but when she arrived he still had no venue; given this uncertainty, she joined Gye's company instead (*MM*, 29-31; Herman Klein, *The Reign of Patti* [New York: The Century Co., 1920]; and John Frederick Cone, *Adelina Patti: Queen of Hearts* [Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1994]).

²⁸ Rosselli's *Opera Industry* is invaluable for understanding Italian impresarios' activities. I will focus my comments in the following discussion specifically on industry structure and seasonal cycles in London.

²⁹ Willert Beale (as Walter Maynard), *The Enterprising Impresario* (London: Bradbury, Evans & Co., 1867), 3-4.

the press and royal patrons. The chapter concludes with a particular focus on the instability and distrust which permeated this competitive environment.³⁰

In direct contrast to theatrical entrepreneurs in other European cities during this period, in which governments, monarchs or wealthy patrons funded the construction of monumental theatres and afterwards subsidized artistic activities, Gye and Mapleson enjoyed no such advantages. Opera management was strictly a matter of private enterprise. Beale's comment about an impresario's liability to Government may have referred to the Lord Chamberlain's power to grant theatrical licenses to non-patent theatres, to approve the libretti of new works, and to coordinate arrangements for State events. The Lord Chamberlain did not extend any financial support, however, and never invoked his right of censorship over the two Italian opera companies during the 1860s. The managers certainly appreciated their freedom from direct government interference; Gye declined the chance to take over the Paris Théâtre Italien in 1863 saying, 'I did not think I was fit for it as I was so accustomed to an independent position and could not bow and scrape to the ministers.'³¹ Without subsidy, the managers depended exclusively on a combination of opera receipts, income from non-operatic activities, and loans from institutions and individuals to finance their operations.

Subscriptions and box office receipts from the London opera season were of paramount importance. Earned revenue from opera performances constituted 85% of Gye's total annual income from 1861-67.³² A key question, however, was whether there

³⁰ My thoughts about industry structure have been influenced by Michael Porter of the Harvard Business School, whose pioneering work *Competitive Strategy* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1980) revolutionized business management in the early 1980s. Porter's basic premise is that a business cannot be viewed as an independent entity operating in a vacuum. Rather, it must be viewed in relation to the industry in which it exists and the companies with which it competes. That relationship is defined by various 'forces' which encompass all aspects of how a company operates. For the historian, this framework helps to illuminate the power relationships within an industry during a specific period, and also to suggest explanations for managers' actions.

³¹ GD, 9 February 1863.

³² Frederick Gye Royal Italian Opera Account, Bank ledgers, 1861-67, Coutts & Co. Archives, London (cited hereafter as Coutts ledgers). Such detailed figures do not exist for Mapleson's company. Chapter 3 will examine the finances of both companies in closer detail.

existed enough of an audience to fill two houses; as J. W. Davison observed in *The Times*,

The Italian Opera season is at hand, and once again the problem has to be solved whether this great capital, populous as it is and decidedly musical, be ready and willing to extend such help to two vast establishments, kept up exclusively for the performance of lyric dramas in a foreign tongue, as shall enable either or both to support an honourable and not altogether unprofitable existence.³³

The audience for Italian opera, though limited, had grown remarkably through the 1840s and 1850s, as part of broader changes to the fabric of musical life in England. Most notably, the sight-singing movements of Joseph Mainzer and John Hullah, launched in 1841, helped to catalyze widespread participation in choral music and boost the popularity of oratorio. The Great Exhibition of 1851 and, from 1854, the Crystal Palace at Sydenham with August Manns' Saturday concerts and the triennial Handel Festival, regularly attracted concert audiences of between 18,000 and 22,000 people. Concert life in London blossomed, and ranged from such popular entertainments as Jullien's promenade concerts to more substantial orchestral undertakings like the New Philharmonic Society and Monday Pops which specifically sought to attract new audiences, expand the repertoire and increase musical appreciation.³⁴ Annual music festivals flourished in the provinces and railway development greatly expanded the catchment area for music in London.³⁵

Middle class taste for opera also increased during the 1840s, primarily through the performance of Italian opera in English at Covent Garden and Drury Lane, where prices

³³ *Times*, 26 March 1864.

³⁴ Percy A. Scholes, *The Mirror of Music* (London: Novello & Company Ltd., 1947), 1:3-13, 65, 190-92; Donald Burrows, 'Victorian England: an Age of Expansion,' in *The Late Romantic Era*, ed. Jim Samson (London: Macmillan Press, 1991), 269; Michael Musgrave, *The Musical Life of the Crystal Palace* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 49, 133.

³⁵ Major London terminals opened in the following years: London Bridge (1836), Euston (1837), Waterloo (1848), King's Cross (1852) and Paddington (1854); see T. C. Barker and Michael Robbins, *A History of London Transport* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1963), 45-47.

were lower than at Her Majesty's.³⁶ Upper class patrons, who typically subscribed for 40 performances and sat in boxes or orchestra stalls, continued to comprise the core audience for Italian opera. The reconstructed Royal Italian Opera House of 1858, with its large amphitheatre, Lumley's experiments with cheap nights, and Smith's Italian Opera for the People at Drury Lane all offered admission to Italian opera at lower prices, and consolidated the expansion of Italian opera to a bourgeois audience.³⁷ The musical audience had undeniably grown, but the proliferation of performance options and the co-existence of two Italian opera houses challenged the impresarios' ability to fill their houses on the same nights.

The makeup of audiences bore direct implications for the structure of the Italian opera season. At the beginning of the 1860s, the season typically began the first week of April and closed the first week of August, a later start date and an earlier finish than in previous decades. This was hardly the most advantageous time for theatre attendance, given the combination of summer heat, gas lighting and a lack of ventilation, but it coincided with the traditional period in which London served as the locus of upper class social activity. The 'London season,' coming directly after the 'Paris season' at Easter, included other fashionable entertainments and events: Epsom, Ascot, Henley, the Queen's Ball, presentations at court and numerous private parties and concerts in the homes of wealthy individuals. Opera performed in Italian rarely appeared in London outside of this period. Her Majesty's and Covent Garden Theatres usually hosted promenade concerts in August and September, and English Opera from October until the beginning of March, with a hiatus for lucrative pantomimes in December and January. Other venues presented orchestral concerts throughout the first seven months of the year, with most

³⁶ Jennifer Hall traces the rise of the middle class audience for Italian opera, pricing structures, and the social geography of audiences within the theatre in her dissertation 'The Re-Fashioning of Fashionable Society: Opera-going and Sociability in Britain, 1821-1861' (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1996).

³⁷ In 1847, the Royal Italian Opera had an amphitheatre and gallery which could accommodate 600 people; the new house in 1858 had room for 920, priced from 2s. 6d. (Rosenthal, *Two Centuries*, 70; *Survey of London*, ed. F. H. W. Sheppard (London: The Athlone Press, 1970), 35:103). Smith's series at Drury Lane charged 1s. 6d. for pit tickets, 1-2s. for the first and second circles and 6d. for gallery tickets (Hall, 'Re-Fashioning').

activity during the London season. As in earlier times, Tuesdays and Saturdays remained the traditional nights for opera performance and those which subscribers would book in advance. Thursdays were considered 'extra nights,' since they were non-subscription, yet Gye and Mapleson's companies each performed nearly every Thursday.³⁸

The Italian opera season itself consisted of three periods, delineated by the availability of singers and the number and type of theatregoers present in London. The month of April usually witnessed sluggish ticket sales as members of the upper class gradually returned to London and many leading singers completed their engagements in Europe; a singer engaged at the Théâtre Italien, for example, did not have a *congé*—literally, a change or a break—until May unless the London impresario could negotiate a special arrangement with the singer and the French opera manager. April was therefore an ideal time for the impresario to introduce newcomers to the London stage in familiar works. A common tactic to ensure a sizable audience during this slow period was to announce Thursdays as substitute subscription nights, replacing Tuesday or Saturday subscription nights in the final weeks of the season when seats were easier to sell.

May through the beginning of July comprised the height of the opera season for, as the leading *prime donne* reappeared in their familiar roles, the opera attracted a fashionable, upper class audience. Other summer events in London brought visitors from the provinces and the Continent. Many, such as the Crystal Palace entertainments, appealed to a musical audience and the opera companies would feel the benefits of this migration.³⁹ Since this 'country' audience selected the operas they wished to see ahead of time, the impresario needed to announce performance dates and casts in the newspapers with as much advance notice as possible. The end of June and most of July was the period in which new repertoire was produced, if any such works were forthcoming that

³⁸ The managers Laporte and Benjamin Lumley had added Thursday nights in the 1830s as a way to accommodate middle class tourists in London (Hall, 'Re-Fashioning'). These 'Long Thursdays' typically included an opera and a full-length ballet, followed by an act of another opera and a *ballet divertissement* as afterpieces (Wilhelm Kuhe, *My Musical Recollections* [London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1896], 37).

³⁹ GD, 27 June 1865.

season. By mid-July, the wealthier segments of the audience began to leave town on holiday and London was filled with tourists. At this time, some of the leading singers would also leave for their next continental engagements. Benefit performances for one or two of the companies' *prime donne* typically marked the end of the season.

During the opera season, the London impresarios scheduled opera performances and ensured that preparations progressed smoothly. They also devoted a disproportionate amount of time and attention to the ancillary business activities and sources of income which helped them meet their annual expenses: soliciting loans from banks, discount houses or individual money lenders; presenting concerts in outside venues during the opera season; and negotiating a sublet of the theatre for autumn and winter entertainments. A third significant activity of the opera season was contract renegotiation, usually initiated when the singers, conductor and representatives of the orchestra came to collect their last payment. The final settlement of these terms was sometimes delayed until the impresario's recruitment expeditions to the Continent in autumn or spring. The opera manager wrote a season prospectus in March and, on the basis of these promises, sold box subscriptions to wealthy subscribers and blocks of boxes and stalls to the ticket trade for resale. The beginning of the season was a time for entering new contracts, settling old debts from the previous season and re-establishing sundered relationships.

Only a handful of deputies assisted the manager in juggling these various administrative duties: a box office manager, house manager, treasurer and, most important, an acting manager, or deputy, who helped to find new talent and coordinate the final details of contract negotiations. At the Royal Italian Opera in the 1860s, the stage manager Augustus Harris served this function and the singer agent Henry Jarrett assisted Mapleson at Her Majesty's. Nevertheless, the impresario assumed personal oversight over the entire artistic and financial administration, as well as all sales and marketing activities of his company. Gye's diaries illustrate with great clarity that, in such an environment, tradeoffs had to be made daily and seasonally; when one aspect of the business demanded greater attention, another received less.

The artistic administration of an opera company was equally lean, and slowly evolving into a form one might recognize today. Gye and Mapleson did not concern themselves very much with the recruitment or administration of orchestra and chorus; the conductor did. Ever since 1832, when Michael Costa became the first opera conductor in England to lead from the front of the orchestra with a baton, he and others following his example claimed increasing control over the musical preparation of the opera institutions.⁴⁰ The conductor's duties included selecting instrumentalists and choristers, reworking spoken dialogue into accompanied recitative, leading all rehearsals and performances, and finding engagements for the orchestra and chorus outside of the theatre.⁴¹ Nevertheless, the impresario still retained exclusive responsibility for singers and repertoire selection, a dichotomy which caused considerable tension.

In the Royal Italian Opera's first season (1847), the orchestra comprised 79 members but by the early 1860s, it had swelled to 87: an addition of four violins, one cello, two double basses, and one harp. This growth of the strings in relation to woodwinds followed patterns in other opera orchestras at this time.⁴² There was little turnover in the ranks from year to year and 71 of the 87 musicians were English. Mapleson's orchestra, led by Luigi Arditi, was said to be very thin in the early 1860s. By 1866, there seem to have been 80 members, only 40 of whom were English; prospectuses suggest that many musicians were taken from Italian opera houses for the summer season.⁴³ Underneath the conductor served a *maestro al piano*, a chorus master, a music librarian, who also

⁴⁰ Costa was the first, that is, after the composer Hippolyte-André-Baptistes Chelard led a visiting German company in 1832 ('Chelard,' *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie [London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1980], 1:390).

⁴¹ The preparation of French and German operas for Italian performance will be addressed more fully in chapters 2 and 4.

⁴² These figures are based on personnel rosters, not the actual forces used for particular productions. For the orchestra composition in 1847, see 'Orchestra,' *New Grove Opera*, 3:730; for 1863, see *La figlia del reggimento*, ROHA libretto collection.

⁴³ The figure for Her Majesty's and the proportion of English musicians in both companies appeared in *The Athenaeum*, 10 February 1866, 212; cited in Cyril Ehrlich, *The Music Profession in Britain Since the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 80. Apart from this year, Mapleson's orchestra may have numbered significantly less than 80, perhaps in the range of 66 and 72 as suggested in references to his orchestra in the early 1870s (*Times*, 23 March 1874).

served as copyist, and a leader, who served as assistant conductor on the rare occasions when one was needed. The chorus of the Royal Italian Opera was between 80 and 90 voices strong, that of Her Majesty's most likely less.⁴⁴ The chorus, in fact, seemed to be a problematic area for Mapleson. During his first few seasons, he engaged the chorus master of the Théâtre Italien and choristers from Parisian and Italian houses. Subsequently, the ranks changed on an annual basis.⁴⁵

Other aspects of the two companies reflected these musical differences: Gye followed a consistent business model and employed the same personnel from season to season whereas Mapleson changed his tactics and personnel frequently. The ballet, for example, had ceased to be prominently featured in London by the 1860s. Gye and Mapleson would occasionally give a *ballet-divertissement* as an afterpiece if the opera were short, such as *La sonnambula* or *Martha*. Primarily, though, ballet appeared only within the context of operas. Each company retained a principal *danseur* and two to five *danseuses*, a *maitre de ballet*, and a *corps de ballet* of perhaps 24 dancers or more.⁴⁶ Mapleson attempted to re-establish the importance of the ballet beginning in 1863, announcing 10 principals in addition to a reinforced *corps de ballet*, all coming from Italian theatres; he also began to import and commission new *ballets-divertissements*, but he gradually abandoned this policy over the course of subsequent seasons.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Very little information exists about the chorus of either company. A letter from Gye to Costa from 1867 reveals that Gye approved the engagement of 80 chorus members, but not any 'extra' choristers as in previous years (Item 23 in MC Papers). A letter from Gye to Gruneisen states that orchestra, chorus, *maestro al piano*, chorus master and music librarian totalled 180 employees, which would yield a chorus total of 90 (Letter of 26 March 1869, cited in Gruneisen, 52). Figures for Mapleson's company are even more scarce. A prospectus from George Wood's opera venture at Drury Lane in 1854 that Mapleson saved in a scrapbook suggests a precedent for a 60-member chorus at the second opera company in London (Mapleson Scrapbook, Mapleson Music Library, Lindenhurst, New York).

⁴⁵ Her Majesty's Theatre Prospectuses, *Times*, 1862-67.

⁴⁶ Again, numbers for this department are elusive. The 1854 Drury Lane prospectus lists the names of 24 English dancers in the *corps de ballet* but notes that there will be 'twenty others from Vienna, Berlin, and Paris' (Mapleson Scrapbook, Mapleson Music Library).

⁴⁷ Her Majesty's Theatre Prospectus, *Times*, 24 March 1863; author's performance database, 1861-78.

The two companies likewise differed in their production personnel. The stage manager grew in significance and oversaw all production details during this age of scenic spectacles. Gye assembled a feted production team which he retained each season: his stage manager Augustus Harris, the scenic artist William Beverley, the *costumier* Hennier from Paris, and the machinist Henry Sloman.⁴⁸ Mapleson was much criticized for his shabby stagings during his first three seasons and reconstituted his production team each year. In 1864, he announced 'The essential features of a lyrical theatre having been secured [i.e., the musical resources], a more than ordinary share of attention can be bestowed on the subordinate though (in the present day) important and multifarious element of *mise en scène*.'⁴⁹ As will be explored in chapter 3, Mapleson may have devalued scenic elements because his finances and the capabilities of his theatre did not allow him to challenge Gye's lavish spectacles. He finally settled on Dickenson and May as *costumiers* and Telbin as scenic artist but even after his new commitment to *mise-en-scène*, he continued to replace his stage manager each year.⁵⁰

Singers lay at the heart of the managers' artistic policies and financial prospects. Primarily, both Gye and Mapleson engaged singers with reputations already established in other European houses, most frequently the Théâtre Italien. Gye had a better record of finding new singers with star promise, a combination of his more extensive network of continental contacts, his greater ability to seek out new singers himself in the autumn and winter, and the lucrative terms of his contracts. Nevertheless, several traits enabled Mapleson to compete strongly in the market for singers. As suggested in the beginning of this chapter, he related well with singers and treated them generously. He did not possess the means to compensate them as well as Gye could, but his contracts offered

⁴⁸ Royal Italian Opera Prospectuses, *Times*, 1861-67. Michael Costa's contract granted the conductor control over *mise-en-scène*, but all other evidence suggests that Gye's stage manager Augustus Harris, Sr. oversaw all production-related activities (see Appendix C and discussion, chapter 4).

⁴⁹ Her Majesty's Theatre Prospectus, *Times*, 12 March 1864.

⁵⁰ Her Majesty's Theatre Prospectuses, *Times*, 1862-67. A letter from James Henry Mapleson's son suggests a peculiar arrangement at Her Majesty's—that Mapleson 'was his own stage manager' (Henry Mapleson letter to Richard Northcott, 29 August 1925, International Music Museum). Mapleson's prospectuses usually list a stage manager so it is unclear precisely what his son meant.

other concessions which enabled them to boost earnings and control their concert activities themselves. He also benefited from the services of Henry Jarrett, a clever agent who fashioned a unique and unassailable position for himself: impresarios paid him for his services and singers paid him a 10% commission. Both sides sought to benefit from Jarrett's alleged influence over the press.⁵¹

Numerically, each opera troupe was built around two *prime donne absolute*, an apparent contradiction of terms but a parity which the managers, the public and, to a lesser degree, the stars themselves, seemed to accept. In the 1860s, Gye could boast Adelina Patti and Pauline Lucca, but Mapleson claimed Thérèse Tietjens and, alternately, Ilma di Murska and Christine Nilsson. Typically, each company also included two to four additional *prime donne* each year, who usually did not stay more than a season or two. Mezzo-sopranos were largely second class citizens within the opera company, with the exceptions of Zélia Trebelli at Her Majesty's Theatre and Constance Nantier-Didiée at the Royal Italian Opera. Six to eight *seconde donne* filled smaller roles. On the whole, tenors were compensated more highly than sopranos of comparable quality. Mapleson engaged two *primi tenori*, Antonio Giuglini, succeeded by Pietro Mongini, and one other. Gye, meanwhile, depended upon Giovanni Mario, Enrico Tamberlik and usually a third lead tenor. Two to four additional tenors served utility or *comprimario* functions. Baritones could not command the same drawing power as tenors and sopranos, though Francesco Graziani and Jean-Baptiste Faure at the Royal Italian Opera as well as Charles Santley and Edouard Gassier at Her Majesty's were undeniably strong attractions. With the exception of the occasional popular *basso buffo*, the four or five basses in Mapleson's company and the six or seven in Gye's were rarely well-known. Subsequent chapters will illustrate the ways in which a star class of singers—primarily the *prime donne*—extracted increasing concessions from the opera managers and guided programme decisions in the 1860s.

⁵¹ The details of singers' engagements will be discussed at length in chapter 5. Jarrett's unique position and his influence in the opera industry will be revisited in chapter 6.

Success in the opera industry may have depended upon the strength of the principal singers engaged, yet it also required winning allegiance from a small, increasingly powerful group of professionals: music sellers and publishers, or, as Gye classified the trade, 'booksellers.' These firms were vital to ticket sales. A limited body of evidence suggests that, at the Royal Italian Opera, booksellers sold most of the boxes to subscribers before the season; booksellers and the theatre box office sold the majority of orchestra stalls sometime before the performance; and the box office sold most amphitheatre tickets at the time of performance. Altogether, booksellers accounted for between 55% and 65% of sales for Royal Italian Opera performances.⁵² Booksellers were such popular sales channels with wealthy subscribers because they speculated on the best places in the theatre and allowed long terms of payment, which the theatre did not.⁵³ As there were only seven major booksellers handling the impresarios' sales, each one controlled a significant portion of income. John Mitchell, for example, paid Gye from £9,000 to £11,000 each year for boxes and stalls, one-sixth of Gye's total income for the opera season.

Gye typically sold boxes at a 20% discount and stalls at a 5% discount to booksellers, and they, in turn, resold them to their clients at the retail prices advertised in the prospectus.⁵⁴ These arrangements were highly negotiable each year, and a major bookseller like Mitchell was able to exact as much as 40% off the Royal Italian Opera's listed prices.⁵⁵ Evidence from a slightly later period suggests that Mapleson offered

⁵² GD, 16 May 1872; see also the box-office reports for *Tannhäuser* ('Box Office' folder, ROHA), *Lohengrin* and *La fille du régiment* (Boxes D-G and V-Z, Northcott Collection, British Library, London). The Northcott Collection consists mostly of libretti, but includes three standard forms completed by the Royal Italian Opera box office manager which show how many seats were sold in different areas of the theatre and who sold them.

⁵³ The booksellers paid the impresario for their subscriptions over the course of the season. By contrast, it was unusual for Gye to allow direct subscribers to extend payments over the course of the season. Box-office reports confirm that credit was not extended for tickets purchased at the theatre (cf. note 52).

⁵⁴ GD, 11 April 1864, 15 July 1867 and 11 March 1875. For special events, such as a State visit, the booksellers might sell opera tickets at 100% above list price.

⁵⁵ GD, 6 February 1872.

reductions as high as 57%.⁵⁶ The fact that the booksellers paid for some of their boxes in March—that is, before the season began when the impresario was most desperate for cash—bolstered their position. Booksellers also performed a range of other critical services for the impresario. For instance, they negotiated with composers and foreign publishers for the copyrights to the music and libretto of new operas, and could therefore help the impresario secure exclusive performing rights to a new opera.⁵⁷ Booksellers frequently provided short-term loans, particularly when an impresario was in financial difficulty; they valued opera competition because it meant more sales of tickets, music and libretti. Several members of the trade, such as John Mitchell, Thomas Chappell, Frederic and Willert Beale, and George Wood, served as impresarios themselves, an excellent tactic for building a market for their music publications. They could therefore hire the opera manager's singers or sublet his theatre for concert performances, which provided the impresario with ancillary income he welcomed. Conversely, they could threaten the opera impresario with the prospect of establishing a new opera concern themselves.⁵⁸ In each of these capacities, a bookseller was in a position to exact more attractive terms from the impresario for boxes and stalls. The following negotiation, taken from Gye's diary of 1867, demonstrates these dynamics:

Mitchell came again about his boxes and stalls - he tried & tried to screw me down again - last year he made me reduce £500 & this year he wanted another £500 off & when I refused said he should only take about half what he took before thus at this late period throwing a lot of boxes & stalls on my hands - After a great deal of argument we agreed to the following-- I unfortunately owe him £3,000 & I said if he would allow that sum to stand over until season 1868, I would take his offer viz: £9,000 instead of £9,500 which he paid last year-- he having all the same boxes except Letter E which I take back - I spoke to Mitchell about his

⁵⁶ Mapleson box contracts with Keith Prowse, Alfred Hays, William Mitchell and Charles Ollier for the 1879 autumn season, Barclay's Records Services, Wythenshawe.

⁵⁷ These negotiations will be examined closely in chapter 4.

⁵⁸ The threat was not idle. Chappell had sponsored the construction of St. James' Hall in 1858 and created the Monday Pops concert series (Scholes, 206-7). After Beale stood down from the management of the Royal Italian Opera, Mitchell had been asked to take it over but he declined and advanced the name of Frederick Gye (Grüneisen, 11).

taking the theatre for the autumn & winter & [he] seemed or pretended to like the idea and talked of giving a French Play in March after the pantomime.⁵⁹

Clearly, Mitchell had tremendous negotiating power, strengthened by his concurrent position as a bookseller, a frequent creditor to Gye, a potential tenant of the theatre and, always a looming consideration, a generous supporter of Mapleson's concern.

Newspaper critics also rose in prominence just prior to the 1860s. *The Times* was the first paper to appoint a full-time music critic in 1843, a position which J. W. Davison assumed in 1846 and held until 1879.⁶⁰ According to another critic, Joseph Bennett, Davison was 'the undisputed captain of the host,' the most influential arbiter of cultural taste among the public and other critics in his circle.⁶¹ Criticism of this time consisted mainly of performance notices and extensive analyses of new works, albeit buried within spurious aesthetic frameworks. For the most part, the critics supported a two-house opera system. They felt that whereas a single house would present stars in favourite works, a second opera company would have to distinguish itself with a more varied repertoire and strive specifically to improve the musical tastes of the public. These were ends the critics themselves sought to promote.⁶²

The two managers did what they could to influence performance reviews in their favour. Gye was particularly sensitive to public criticism, to the point of obsession; in

⁵⁹ GD, 29 March 1867. Box E was a pit tier box located next to the proscenium arch at stage left. Gye retained it as his personal box because it afforded easy access to the backstage area and the royal entrance.

⁶⁰ 'Criticism,' *New Grove Dictionary*, 5:140.

⁶¹ Bennett, 9-21.

⁶² *Times*, 14 June 1869; GD, 4 April 1872.

1869, he began to keep a special record of negative criticism and specious reports.⁶³ Charles Grüneisen's pamphlet *The Opera and the Press* attacked the managers' self-serving views of journalistic responsibility. He reprinted a private letter in which he berated Gye: 'One of the great delusions under which you labour is that opera news and opera criticism must be exclusively written under the inspiration and direction of managers, as if there was no public interest and no public protection involved in the discussion.'⁶⁴ In his response and in his diaries, Gye maintained that he never once requested a puff from a critic.⁶⁵ The diaries confirm this claim, yet the manager manipulated several levers through which he influenced the press indirectly. Gye would remove a critic from the free list or threaten to withhold advertisements if notices of his performances were not more 'accurate' or, at least, not worse than Mapleson's:

[T]he manager or Editor of the 'Observer' came about the advertisements - In the course of conversation I remarked on the way the paper puffed up Drury Lane, & he said that they did so because Mapleson was so liberal in sending them boxes & stalls & they could have anything in that way they wanted!! I said I always sent as many of those things to the gentlemen of the Press as I thought they, as gentlemen, could accept without appearing to be bribed.⁶⁶

In addition to competing for favourable opera reviews, Gye also lobbied newspaper editors for more prominent placement of notices and advertisements than his rival received. There was a general perception that Mapleson courted the critics more actively

⁶³ The collection of Gye diaries includes a volume entitled 'Press cuttings' where Gye pasted these clippings and marked the passages he found objectionable. For example, a typical clipping (ca. 1869) read, 'We deeply deplore to hear on what we consider good authority that Sig. Mario has committed suicide at St. Petersburg. He is said to have poisoned himself with prussic acid. Grief for the loss of Mdme. Grisi, and the dread of destitution are the reasons assigned for this lamentable act.' Gye also included many performance notices which criticized his singers but praised Mapleson's. The last clippings in this notebook are from 1873.

⁶⁴ Letter of 23 March 1869, cited in Grüneisen, 50-51.

⁶⁵ Letter of 26 March 1869, cited in Grüneisen, 53; GD, 17 April 1872.

⁶⁶ GD, 18 May 1872. This statement illustrates the furthest Gye would venture into unethical territory. Usually in such cases, he adopted a stance of righteous indignation.

and successfully than Gye, a combination of his status as the 'second' opera company in London and his determined promotional efforts.⁶⁷

The managers also contended for royal support. Although the two opera houses bore royal appellations, members of the royal family did not support the managers financially.⁶⁸ The Queen had stopped attending public entertainments, but the upper class audience continued to look to the royal family as a leader of cultural taste. It was therefore necessary to win court favour, a challenge which created havoc for the opera managers. They frequently altered their schedules to accommodate the Prince of Wales' preferences, or the Queen's desire to host singers in private concerts at the palace. Royal support was, in fact, expensive to secure. Their private concerts, for example, hurt theatre attendance and failed to cover the impresario's costs: 'The Queen takes 2 of my principal people away and pays 30 guineas each for them, whereas I always pay Patti £100 per night & when I let Vilda sing a concert I receive £52.10 for her!!'⁶⁹ Similarly, Gye haggled each season with the Queen's secretary about the low price paid for the royal box: 'we had some conversation about the price which the Queen pays me for her double box-- viz: £525 for every night in the season-- when one of the public would pay for the same box (without the entrances ante room &c which the Queen has) about £1,000.'⁷⁰ The royal family could pit impresarios against each other to extract favours, and for these limited opportunities, the managers would cope with inconvenience or monetary loss. Still, the net benefits of royal patronage—great publicity and large houses—proved to the impresario's financial favour. Gala State visits, especially, brought financial benefits. Whereas a regular performance at the Royal Italian Opera

⁶⁷ See GD, 23 June 1872 for an example of Mapleson's efforts to befriend the press. Cone, *First Rival* shows Mapleson to be a gifted exploiter of newspaper publicity.

⁶⁸ Upon Victoria's coronation, the proprietors of the King's Theatre received royal permission to rename it Her Majesty's, since 'The Queen's Theatre' had been taken by another. Likewise, the backers of the Royal Italian Opera gained approval for its name in 1846.

⁶⁹ GD, 9 July 1866.

⁷⁰ GD, 4 May 1866.

might realize an income of £700 or £800, two State visits in the 1860s with inflated ticket prices attracted £2,000 and £2,607 respectively.⁷¹

Gye and Mapleson's positions relative to the talent they hired and the professionals and individuals who supported their operations were clearly unfavourable. Consequent to this relative weakness, and perhaps contributing to it further, competition between the rival managers was acrimonious. The symptoms were those usually associated with impresarios: efforts to steal each other's singers, lawsuits over the rights to new works, rumours about each other's financial health, battles waged through letters printed in the newspapers, moves and countermoves. Gye was frank about his low opinion of his rivals in the privacy of his diaries as well as in public; he wrote in his diary, for example, 'I have heard bad things of Lumley & now find him a devil incarnate - the most dreadful rascal with the smoothest face & manner I ever in the whole course of my life met.'⁷²

Mapleson's suspicion of Gye is well-known, as he provided in his *Memoirs* an annual summary of how Gye followed a 'policy to bring my career as operatic manager to an abrupt end':

In 1862, just when I was on the point of opening Her Majesty's Theatre, the late Mr Augustus Harris, Mr Gye's stage manager and adviser on many points, approached Mdlle Tietjens with an offer of a blank engagement.

In 1863 Mr Gye's insidious but unsuccessful advances towards Mdlle Tietjens were repeated....

In 1867 Mr Gye may have been nurturing I know not what deadly scheme against my theatre. But this year a fatal accident came to his aid, and he was spared the trouble of executing any hostile design. It was in 1867 that Her Majesty's Theatre was destroyed by fire....

In 1869 Mr Gye was intriguing with Lord Dudley to get Her Majesty's theatre into his hands.⁷³

⁷¹ GD, 6 February 1865, 20 April 1863, 9 July 1867. These State visits also cost the impresario considerable sums. For the 1867 State event, Gye expended £1,300 in decorating the theatre and sought recompense, unsuccessfully, from the Lord Chamberlain's office.

⁷² GD, 25 December 1851.

⁷³ MM, 89-90.

The language used in his litany of Gye's annual 'attacks' is more than just rhetorical flourish; it betrays deep-rooted suspicion and distrust.

The virulence of this rivalry was a result of the uncertainty surrounding the opera industry, which manifested itself in several ways. Certainly, the revenue stream was far from secure or predictable. As with any perishable good, if an opera company failed to sell a seat for a particular performance, that potential income could not be realized at a later date but was lost. In this system with income exclusively dependent upon the patronage of a limited audience, sensitivities were heightened. The very structure of this opera system constituted a second source of uncertainty. This discussion has addressed systematically the various individuals and business concerns which comprised the opera industry of mid-nineteenth-century London. Such an approach, while conducive to the purpose of introduction, can be somewhat misleading, however, for the 'industry' was not so clearly defined and segmented. The fact that Mapleson and Gye headed their opera institutions for so long imparts a false sense that this was a stable, unchanging industry, and masks what was really a more fluid set of relationships. The multiple, overlapping functions of booksellers, discussed before, was typical. Many figures in the impresario's world served sometimes as allies, other times as adversaries; dual allegiances contributed to an environment of mistrust.

The Gye diaries promote the sense that the two-house system led by Gye and Mapleson could have been upset at any moment. Barriers to enter the opera business were low. All one needed was access to one of four possible venues for opera—in order of attractiveness, the Royal Italian Opera, Her Majesty's Theatre, Drury Lane or the Lyceum—a small group of leading singers, an orchestra and a chorus. The first three of these theatres had a stock of costumes and properties from which an aspiring impresario could draw. Additionally, capital was fairly easy to secure since the booksellers were eager to support competition. As Mapleson's entry into the field in 1861 demonstrated, various players in the industry already had strong links to one or more of the few

requirements for opera presentation and were therefore well-poised to launch a new venture.

Once in the opera industry, it was difficult to get out, a circumstance that further intensified the Gye-Mapleson rivalry. In times of financial difficulty, there was very little else an impresario could do with his specialized assets (singer and orchestra engagements and a store of music and costumes) short of selling these to another manager or declaring bankruptcy. The first of these options was untenable, in part because animosity ran so high, and the second was unattractive. In times of difficulty, Gye and Mapleson were inclined to remain in business and lose money, without surrendering. If one manager operated in such a condition, the other suffered because singers, booksellers and other individuals demanded the same favourable terms they could expect from a desperate rival. Gye and Mapleson may have dreamed of achieving monopoly, but this goal contrasted directly with the reality of an industry predicated upon mutual co-dependencies, diffused power and pervasive uncertainty. Although the two impresarios played a fundamental and leading role in all aspects of managing their institutions, other individuals and market forces clearly shaped and limited their behaviour and choices.

Chapter 2

Repertoire

The Italian Opera Tradition in London

The opera industry and audience changed substantially in the 1840s and 1850s; however, the repertoire and performance conventions from an earlier period continued. The two opera houses fought squarely within the bounds of an Italian opera tradition which extended directly back, with little interruption, to the début of Nicolini, the Italian *castrato*, at John Vanbrugh's Queen's Theatre in 1708 and the arrival of Handel in London two or three years later.¹ At Her Majesty's Theatre during the years leading up to 1847, this tradition signified the presentation of Italian works with Italian singers for an upper-class audience. When the Royal Italian Opera entered the fray, this strict definition relaxed somewhat but remained in place. From an aesthetic point of view, Italian was the preferred language and style for opera for 'its passionate expression, its melodious grace, and its perfect adaptation of vocal passages to vocal capabilities,' as an entry in the original edition of George Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (1883) maintained.² Closer to the period under consideration, in 1862, the critic Henry Chorley extolled the lasting appeal of Rossini's music along similar dimensions, praising 'the vivacity of his style, the freshness of his melodies.'³

The opera audience in London held conflicting expectations for each Italian opera season, which complicated managers' selection of repertoire: the onus was on the impresario to present both 'novel' and familiar works. 'Novelty' connoted most frequently a particular work or singer which added interest or excitement to the season. It did not

¹ Price, Milhous and Hume, *Italian Opera*, 2-4.

² W. S. Rockstro, 'Schools of Composition,' *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. George Grove (London: Macmillan and Co., 1879-89), 3:301.

³ Chorley, 1:34.

mean the presentation of newly composed works in their world premières. During the eighteenth century, the King's Theatre had employed one or two house composers to rework imports from the Continent into pastiches and also to write new operas.⁴ By the 1850s, however, the economics of opera production in London did not encourage the commissioning of new operas, nor did popular taste demand it. The risk to British impresarios of staging untested works was considerable, given the increased scale and expense of *grand opéra* productions and the absence of subvention. Additionally, managers had to fight a general perception that England was not a locus for artistic creation.⁵ Lumley's last commission was Sigismondo Thalberg's *Florinda* (1851) and the only opera to receive its world première at the Royal Italian Opera during Gye's entire tenure was Jullien's *Pietro il Grande* (1852). Mapleson only introduced two new compositions, neither of which he commissioned: Francesco Schira's *Niccolò de' Lapi* (1863) and Michael Balfe's *Il Talismano* (1874), presented four years after the composer's death.⁶

Opera managers attempted to satisfy their audiences' preoccupation with novelty at a low risk—through the introduction of works by known composers, with proven success in continental opera houses, but new to England. The upper classes would have heard these works or at least heard about them during the Paris season or their European travels. As Mapleson's conductor Luigi Arditi observed,

[Schira's *Niccolò de' Lapi*] did not perhaps meet with the approbation and enthusiasm the music should or would have commanded had it been produced in any other country prior to its performance in England. I have always declared that unless a musical work bears a *cachet* of excellence from abroad it will probably be received in this country with reserve and even coldness at the outset. Absolutely unknown compositions, such as

⁴ Price, Milhous and Hume, *Italian Opera*, 118. The convention of a house composer was obsolete by the 1830s, after which time the conductor assumed primary responsibility for preparing a work for the Italian stage.

⁵ Burrows, 267-8.

⁶ Balfe never completed *The Talisman*. Costa, conducting for Mapleson's company, finished the work in an Italian version.

'Nicolo de Lapi,' for instance, have stood, and always do stand, but faint chances of creating a favourable impression in London.⁷

The provision of novelty had also come to include the presentation of older works still unknown in London, such as *Orfeo* in 1860, usually following a popular revival elsewhere in Europe. As the production of genuinely new works diminished through the 1850s, managers also tried to pass as novelties those operas which had not appeared in London for as few as six years.⁸ An additional ploy to generate interest was to announce a new singer's début or an established singer's first assumption of a familiar role. According to J. W. Davison, if a manager did not present a few novelties over the course of the season, 'subscribers would have some right to murmur, and the general public to button up its breeches pocket.'⁹ Critics and the public welcomed competition between two Italian opera houses because it pushed the managers to add more new works to distinguish themselves, and thus generated more interest for the opera season.¹⁰

In contradiction to this demand for novelty, a desire for familiar works also prevailed among the opera audience in London. Reverence of the familiar is evident in Davison's endorsement of Mapleson's repertoire in 1861, exclusively comprised of the most popular works: 'the inevitable *Trovatore*, the always welcome *Lucrezia*, the universally popular *Martha*, the stately *Norma*, the magnificent *Huguenots*, and the unequalled *Don Giovanni*.'¹¹ There existed in London at this time more than simply a wish for established works, but the full expectation to see them. Davison wrote, 'It was not to be expected that Mr Gye would attempt [the novelty *L'étoile du Nord*] until he had furnished himself

⁷ Arditì, 124.

⁸ Contemporary critics welcomed such attempts to vitalize the standard repertoire but questioned whether the impresario could fairly call them novelties. Since the 1860s witnessed a revival of works from the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, I include with 'novelties' any work which had not been seen in London for a generation, or 25 years.

⁹ *Times*, 27 April 1863.

¹⁰ See, for example, *Times*, 4 May 1863; Grünisen, 40.

¹¹ *Times*, 8 July 61.

with a sufficient number of the more familiar and indispensable operas belonging to his formerly varied and extensive repertory.'¹²

Such expectation was shaped by memories of performances and performers of the past, a process not unfamiliar to our own day. Newspaper reviews and many contemporary memoirs reveal that the critics' and public's memory ran strong, creating a lore around certain star performers in certain roles. Although these accounts rarely posited direct comparisons between rival singers and rival houses, the remembrance of interpreters past clearly lingered as a formidable benchmark by which to gauge the present. A few examples taken from *The Times* from a single season, 1862, illustrate this influence:

The character of Gilda, in *Rigoletto*, was a severe ordeal for an untried and unknown artist to brave, in presence of such an audience as that of the Royal Italian Opera, which even the elaborate vocalization of Madame Miolan Carvalho could not persuade for one instant to forget the incomparable performance of Angiolina Bosio.

Titieni's Norma with the single exception of Grisi is the noblest assumption since Pasta. Mademoiselle Titieni may not sing 'Casta Diva' to absolute perfection; but no non-Italian singer—excepting Madame Cruvelli, and, perhaps without excepting Jenny Lind—ever did; nor, by the way, did Madame Grisi, who was nothing if not Italian.¹³

By the 1860s, certain operas had strong associations in the mind of the public, invariably with the singers who first introduced them to London from the 1820s through the 1850s. In effect, the weight of this tradition delimited the works that an impresario would present even after that singer retired. An historical reference such as 'Bosio's Gilda' was at once a warning and a challenge to contemporary singers and impresarios to put forward a successor who could 'take over' a role as their own—not any role but the specific roles which had become so celebrated with legendary interpreters of the past.

¹² *Times*, 8 April 1863. Interestingly, Simon McVeigh identified a similar dichotomy between the novel and the familiar in concert programmes in late-eighteenth-century London (*Concert Life in London from Mozart to Haydn* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993], 73ff).

¹³ *Times*, 18 June and 15 July 1862.



This demand for the familiar, so critical to the continuation of a tradition, may have been grounded in distinct social uses of the opera for different segments of the changing audience. The upper class audience consumed star singers and their assumptions of certain roles as commodities from the 1820s through the 1840s; they became items of fashion which the *bon ton* could sample in the theatre. As Davison's reminiscences suggest, the very act of recalling opera attendance during the days of 'Cruvelli's Norma' conferred a certain credibility to a critic or audience member in the 1860s. Implicit in this validation process is that members of this traditional audience were disposed to identify an able contemporary singer to inherit certain roles. Their ability to trace a passage from Pasta to Grisi to Tietjens in the role of Norma, for instance, enabled them to engage in discourse which perpetuated their authority in operatic matters. The emerging middle class audience, by contrast, would have looked to educate themselves through the works familiar to audiences of an earlier day. The discovery of new interpreters for these works—their own interpreters—consummated their inclusion into a continuum of Italian opera attendance.¹⁴ These hypotheses by no means constitute a comprehensive explanation for the perpetuation of an Italian opera tradition; chapters 3 through 5 will explore more material and aesthetic reasons in greater depth. Nevertheless, this discussion provides a sense of the potency of the Italian tradition and the fervor with which the audience valued the familiar alongside the new.

Italian Opera Challenged

By the late 1850s, several musical, social and political developments converged to threaten the Italian tradition. Between 1820 and 1845, French and German operas had appeared occasionally at Her Majesty's Theatre, performed primarily by visiting foreign

¹⁴ See Hall, 'Re-Fashioning' for further discussion of the changing social uses of opera attendance.

companies in the original language, and rarely by the resident company in Italian.¹⁵ The flow of new operas and singers from the Italian peninsula to London, however, began to dwindle, while the prolific output of Auber, Meyerbeer and Donizetti in the 1840s confirmed Paris as the new centre of operatic composition. The establishment of the Royal Italian Opera in 1846 constituted a direct challenge to the hegemony of Italian opera. With its explicit concern to expand the repertoire, this new company inaugurated a marked shift in the nature of Italian opera programming: from a tradition of 'Italian opera' to one of 'opera performed in Italian.'¹⁶ The late 1840s initiated the widespread assimilation of French *grand opéra* into the repertoire of the Italian opera companies. To facilitate the arrival and acceptance of this genre, Gye imported the French works of composers most clearly influenced by Italian style—Rossini, Donizetti and Meyerbeer—whose reputations were already secure in London. The incorporation of these works into the repertoire was further expedited by making them more 'Italianate': a poet would translate the libretto into Italian; the original composer, another composer or the house conductor would replace dialogue with orchestrated recitative; and, through the course of preparation, dramatic structure was often reorganized and some scenes and music cut altogether.¹⁷ These transformations were standard; when Gye expressed to Meyerbeer in 1859 an interest in his new *opéra-comique*, *Le pardon de Ploërmel*, the composer immediately responded that 'he should at once order the recitative to be written and the Italian translation to be done.'¹⁸ In the early 1850s, the growth of French opera on the Italian stage was explosive: of the thirty operas Gye introduced by 1855, eleven were *grands opéras* or *opéras-comiques* transformed into the grand style. From 1849 until the destruction of the Royal Italian Opera in 1856, the Italian *bel canto* repertoire fell

¹⁵ Chorley, 50-51, 263. Visiting companies also presented French and German works in the vernacular at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, as did the resident company in English. Covent Garden, however, was not an Italian opera company at the time.

¹⁶ See chapter 1, 25.

¹⁷ Dideriksen, 'Repertory and Rivalry' will address these issues of performance practice and preparation for the Italian stage.

¹⁸ GD, 12 March 1859.

dramatically from 80% to an average of 45% of all performances while Meyerbeer's operas alone (*Les Huguenots*, *Robert le diable*, *L'étoile du Nord*, and *Le prophète*) comprised over 30%. The transition was less marked at Her Majesty's, where Italian operas continued to dominate.

The new vogue for French opera performed in Italian injected variety into the increasingly rigid canon of operas performed on the Italian stage each year. Perhaps more threatening to the Italian tradition was a shortage of native Italian singers; Davison wrote, 'The race of Italian singers, carefully educated in the genuine Italian school, seems to be fast dying out.'¹⁹ The primary reason for this shortage was that many Italian opera houses had been established in the 1840s and 1850s which, naturally, diminished the number of able Italian singers that could be found in any one opera centre. This shortage may have been exacerbated by changing methods in Italian singing style and also by the *risorgimento*, economic crisis and war with Austria having claimed the time and attention of the Italian peninsula for so long.²⁰ Increasingly, English opera managers looked elsewhere to fill their companies' ranks and native German, French, East European and American singers began to assume the Italian roles with increasing regularity.

This burgeoning internationalization of works and singers on the Italian opera circuit may not have been problematic in itself, but these changes came at a time in Europe marked by heightened imperial activity. National culture was an acutely sensitive subject and aesthetic judgments became infused with the language, tension and politics of international diplomacy. A French composer or a German singer could not be accepted without question as exponents of the Italian lyric tradition; Victorian preconceptions about national styles were raised and deliberated.²¹ Critical reviews of the 1850s and

¹⁹ *Times*, 31 July 1865.

²⁰ The singing manuals of Manuel García (1840), Francesco Lamperti (1864), Leone Giraltoni (1864), Enrico Panofka (1866) and Enrico delle Sedie (1874) spoke against the practice of shouting from the chest which marked a change from the lyricism of Rossini's day (John Rosselli, *Singers of Italian Opera* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992], 107-8). Gye's travel diaries confirm these trends, recording many complaints about singers who 'shout' as a means to receive applause. See Rosselli, *Opera Industry*, 168 for a discussion of the impact of revolution on opera production in Italy.

²¹ It is typical of this culture that one of the longest entries in the first *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* methodically scrutinized 'Schools of Composition' along national lines. The entry, written by

1860s betray such preoccupations in nearly every performance notice, sometimes in a word or two but often in voluminous dissections and confused classifications of differences among national styles:

True, we learn that [the English composer W. C. Levey's] education is French, and that he has passed some years...in the intimate musical circles of Parisian life...it is nevertheless, a pity, for despite its alluring fascinations, the French theatre-music has neither the solidity and poetic depth of the German, nor the breadth and melodic flow of the Italian; and only such brilliant genius as that of Auber, who in modern times has literally engrossed the inventive faculty of musical France, or a mind as graceful and contemplative as that of the composer of *Faust*, who after all—witness his latest work, *La Reine de Saba*—is approaching more and more nearly to the form and spirit of modern Germany, can make us overlook a certain petty mannerism, born at the Opera Comique, and influencing in a greater or lesser degree the whole phenomenon of French lyrical productivity. Auber, moreover—though the presiding deity of the French, as Rossini of the Italian school—is one of the few gifted men who really belong to no country, inasmuch as his music appeals to the sympathies of the world at large; while M. Gounod betrays a certain tendency towards that mingling of various styles brought to perfection by Meyerbeer whose *Huguenots* and *Dinorah*—to cite two examples having little else in common—are not French, nor German, nor Italian, but a compound of the three....Nor is it easy to understand, under any circumstances, why an Englishman should strive heart and soul to become a Frenchman.²²

To a modern reader, this meditation seems desperate in its attempt to categorize a composer or work by a particular national style defined by a rigid set of criteria; one senses the critic struggling with a tenuous typology. As national 'schools' influenced and conflated with each other, and as the tradition of 'Italian opera' gave way to 'opera in Italian,' it was becoming harder to define distinct boundaries of a superior Italian style. This type of classification system was nothing new; music critics had offered similar

W. S. Rockstro, occupies 57 pages and systematically describes the German, Italian and French 'Schools of the 19th Century' (1883, 3:258-314). For an example of similar rigidity in political discourse, see Matthew Arnold, *England and the Italian Question* (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1859).

²² *Times*, 18 January 1864.

constructs in the guise of aesthetic theories since the eighteenth century.²³ Analyses along national lines may have been the Victorian attempt to defuse the threat which stylistic eclecticism posed to the hegemony of Italian opera. Yet, at the same time, this rhetoric challenged the premise of perpetuating 'opera in Italian.' After a performance of a French or German work sung in Italian, critics discussed the many musical merits of other styles but ultimately judged the works against the standard of 'Italian' opera. This inscription of normative assumptions upon the repertoire constituted an interesting paradox. Why judge these operas according to Italian models? Why perform them in Italian at all? Even Henry Chorley, a conservative adherent to the Italian tradition, opined, 'German music and Southern words do not agree; nor has the experiment of translation ever succeeded....The terrors of the Wolf's Glen [in *Der Freischütz*] lose half their terror, when "done in Italian." Neither is recitative introduced in place of spoken dialogue often happy.'²⁴ Inadvertently, the rhetoric called attention to the awkwardness of the attempts to cast non-Italian works in Italian clothing.

The number of non-Italian singers appearing on the stage also provoked considerable discussion in the newspapers and among industry professionals about the condition of Italian opera. The primary problem with such 'foreign' singers was their inability to pronounce the language well:

[W]e are constrained to put up with German, French, Spanish, even English and American 'Italians,' to whom the Italian tongue, whatever their abstract musical acquirements, is and must always be in a serious degree an impediment, and from whom correct accent and refined inflection are not to be expected.²⁵

²³ See 'Criticism' and 'Aesthetics of Music,' *New Grove Dictionary*, 5:38-45 and 1:120-29. For a full discussion of music journalism in England, see Leanne Langley, 'The English Musical Journal in the Early Nineteenth Century' (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Ph.D. dissertation, 1983) and 'Italian Opera and the English Press, 1836-56,' *Periodica musica* (1988).

²⁴ Chorley, 121-22.

²⁵ *Times*, 29 March 1862.

Critics expressed surprise when a 'foreigner' managed to traverse linguistic difficulties and to demonstrate a proper lyrical singing style:

Among serious operas there is nothing more legitimately Italian than this splendid composition [*Semiramide*], and only those who have been thoroughly trained in the Italian style of vocalization can sing the music with the indispensable fluency. It is highly creditable to Mdlle Titiens, who was educated in the German school, which has little in common with the Italian, that she should have made herself mistress of a style wholly foreign to her earliest associations.²⁶

As the shortage of native Italians became more conspicuous, critics stretched their descriptive powers to coin epithets which endowed singers from other nations with an Italian aura; Tietjens, a Hungarian, thus received the clumsy label of 'the greatest of modern German-Italian dramatic singers.'²⁷ Contemporary prescriptions for resolving differences in national singing styles only rarely considered the presentation of works in the original language or the programming of fewer genuinely Italian works—those which demanded an Italianate style. Rather, the solution of choice was that the singer must receive further Italian training. In 1876, for example, Gye advised Amalie Materna 'to leave the German stage entirely & go to Italy & study for an Italian career'; the soprano had appeared at the first Bayreuth festival earlier that year as Brünnhilde.²⁸ A few weeks before that conversation, Gye had conveyed similar thoughts to Heinrich Vogl, the most celebrated *Heldentenor* of the day:

Vogl said he only spoke German & had never even seen an Italian opera - I told him that if he wished to take to the Italian Career he ought to give up the German altogether, but he seemed timid about giving up the certainty he now has....I wished him to come to London next season not to sing but to hear some Italian operas & our great artistes but he said he

²⁶ *Times*, 24 July 1865. See also *Illustrated London News*, 3 December 1864 for condemnation of the German singing style.

²⁷ *Times*, 15 August 1864.

²⁸ GD, 6 December 1876.

was already engaged in Germany....In the mean time he said he would begin to study the Italian language.²⁹

The contrivance of continuing to Italianize everything clearly permeated these deliberations of compositional and singing style. Though the question was rarely raised explicitly in artistic or critical circles, the preservation of an Italian opera tradition in the face of the increasingly frequent appearance of non-Italian works and singers seemed obstinate, the rationale for doing so less clear.³⁰

Changes in other areas of the musical landscape further challenged the hegemony of Italian opera during the 1850s. As touched upon earlier, the growth in the middle class audience and a concurrent advancement in musical sophistication resulted from and, in turn, promoted the establishment of a wide range of institutions:

We have two Italian operas, one English opera, two Philharmonic Societies, societies for the performance of sacred oratorios, the Musical Society of London, two 'Academies,' the Monday Popular Concerts, choral societies (without reckoning Mr Henry Leslie's Choir), the Vocal Association, &c., enough to provide us with harmonious recreation and instruction from January to December to say nothing of a yearly average of some 500 concerts of various descriptions.³¹

The new concert series and societies expanded their programming from Handel, Beethoven and Mendelssohn, to include Schubert and Spohr. London had its first introduction to Wagner in 1855. The orchestral selections he conducted for the Philharmonic Society were not received well but the series launched extensive debates

²⁹ GD, 24 November 1876. Vogl had created the roles of Loge and Siegmund. Earlier that year, he sang Loge in Bayreuth. He did not appear in London until 1882, as Loge and Siegfried in the first London *Ring*, performed at Her Majesty's (*New Grove Opera*, 4:1035).

³⁰ The managers' aesthetic evaluations of national styles will be revisited in chapter 4.

³¹ *Times*, 4 July 1863. Davison also pointed to 'a sensible advance in taste....The upshot...is that our public is a better judge than formerly, and that while the good enjoys a fairer chance of being readily acknowledged, the bad and the indifferent find greater difficulty in passing muster' (*Times*, 7 May 1861).

over his theories and music.³² The re-emergence of English opera in 1858 in a venture led by the singers Louisa Pyne and William Harrison enriched the musical fabric of London and provided the general public with an alternative to Italian opera: music drama it could understand linguistically. With new works by Balfe, Benedict, Mellon and Wallace based upon national subjects and infused with national music idioms, the venture also offered opera^{what} had specific dramatic and musical meaning to an English audience. In fact, discussions in favour of English opera would revive age-old attacks of Italian opera:

Doubtless there are a vast number among us, honest and candid people in their way, who would prefer obtaining a faint glimpse of the meaning of a poetical composition, through the aid of a foreign language, to entirely apprehending its scope and intentions through the simple intervention of our 'mother tongue.' And this, perhaps, in works purely exotic, both in conception and execution, may be reasonably defended. But Goethe's *Faust* has much more in common with English feeling than with French or Italian.³³

In other corners of the music drama, Offenbach founded the Bouffes-Parisiennes in 1855 and English impresarios began to deliberate the importation of his extravaganzas to London. Operetta would soon come into vogue with a cross-section of the public and a host of new theatres would house it.

Faced with so much change in the musical climate by the early 1860s, the managers of Italian opera houses in London had to consider their own programming policies. Should they begin to present more works outside of the scope of the Italian tradition such as those of Offenbach and Wagner? Should they abandon the practice of presenting operas in Italian translation in favour of original language productions? Or perhaps should they continue the practice of the previous fourteen years and present the public with a programme of favourite operas amply supplemented with new works?

³² Scholes, 252; Lynn Binstock, 'A Study of Music in Victorian Prose,' (D. Phil. dissertation, Oxford University, 1985).

³³ *Times*, 26 January 1864.

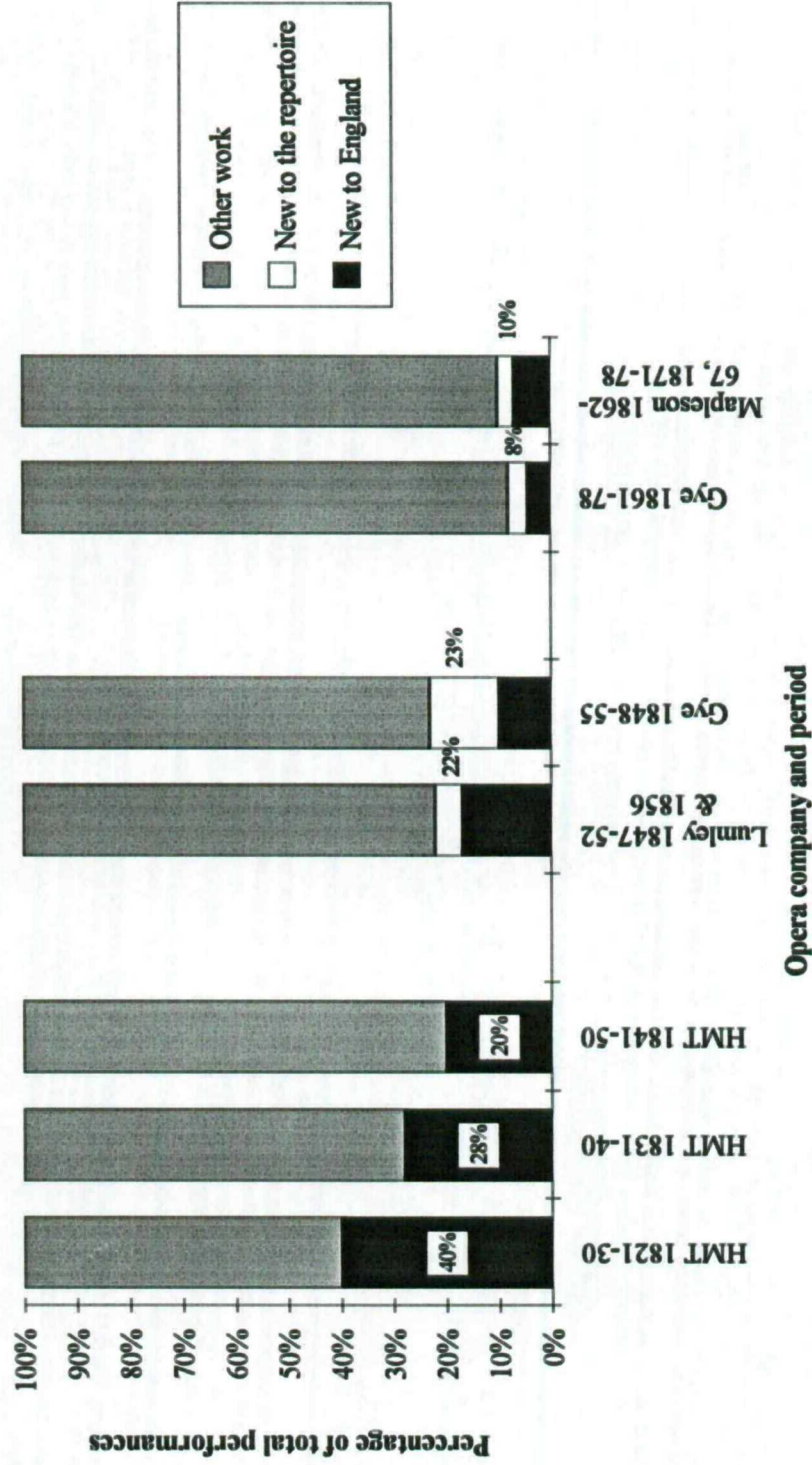
Subsequent chapters will reveal that managers in London considered, and in some cases attempted, each one of these policies in the ensuing decades. Ultimately, none of these policies prevailed: the programming of favourite operas continued but the 1860s and 1870s witnessed a steep decline in the introduction of new operas, despite the impresarios' annual promises to deliver novelty. The remainder of this chapter will present evidence which supports Shaw's assertion that Gye and Mapleson were trapped in Donizettian dark ages and which subsequent chapters will seek to explain.

The Repertoire Freeze of the 1860s and 1870s

The notion that programming 'stagnated' or was 'uninspired' cannot be taken at face value. The claim needs to be defined further in quantitative terms. One distinct trend in the repertoire of these decades was a decrease in the number of new works presented each season relative to earlier years. Table 1 shows the relative proportion of novelties and standard works, given as percentages of total performances, at the two theatres over time. At Her Majesty's Theatre, the proportion of novelties to standard works fell steadily from the 1820s (four new works per season, comprising 40% of all performances) through the 1840s (two new works per season, or 20% of performances). From 1847 through 1856, Benjamin Lumley continued the trend of the 1840s, producing an average of two new works per year, or 22% of performances. At the Royal Italian Opera, during a similar period, 23% of all performances were new to the company, though not as many of these works were new to England. Between 1861 and 1878, however, Gye averaged fewer than two additions to his repertoire each year, 8% of all performances.³⁴ Similarly, Mapleson averaged less than two new works per season (10% of performances) during his first six seasons at Her Majesty's (1862-67) and, after the

³⁴ This figure of two additions per year excludes the productions which were recreated for the Royal Italian Opera after all materials were destroyed in the fire of 1856.

Table 1: The decline of novelty



Source: Author's database of Italian opera performances, 1861-78, based upon *Times*; Jennifer Hall list for Her Majesty's 1821-1861
Note: Sufficient information not available to divide Her Majesty's novelties from 1821-50 between new to England and new to repertoire.
Lumley 1847-52 & 1856 overlaps with HMT 1841-50.

Gye-Mapleson coalition, at Drury Lane (1871-76) and again at Her Majesty's Theatre (1877-78).³⁵

Theatregoers and critics in the 1860s still fully expected impresarios to produce novelties each season. Increasingly, critics chastised Mapleson and Gye for displacing novelties with works like the 'hackneyed' *Lucia di Lammermoor* and *Il trovatore*. Booksellers echoed these criticisms since they felt the dismay of subscribers most directly. Moreover, creative programming was not completely unknown among other opera ventures in London. The Pyne-Harrison English Opera Company, for example, produced fifteen new works out of a total of twenty-eight during its six winter seasons at Covent Garden—including several new commissions. On the Italian stage, a short-lived company at Drury Lane managed by George Wood and Henry Jarrett in 1870 was relatively adventurous. Four of its eighteen works were new to London, including Thomas' *Mignon*, Weber's *Abu Hassan*, a completed version of Mozart's *L'oca del Cairo* and the first Wagner opera ever staged in England, *Der fliegende Holländer*.

A second pronounced trend of this period, in line with the first, was that the two managers repeatedly presented only a very small segment of all the works in their repertoires. From 1861-78, five works at the Royal Italian Opera (*Faust*, *Don Giovanni*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Guillaume Tell* and *Les Huguenots*) and a different set of five at Her Majesty's Theatre (*Faust*, *Huguenots*, *Lucia*, *Trovatore* and *Lucrezia Borgia*) constituted one third of all the performances at each company (tables 2 and 3). These tables reveal that the impresarios barraged the public each year with an endless stream of these operas and other traditional works such as *Martha*, *Norma*, *Rigoletto* and *La traviata*.³⁶ They also show that many of the novelties introduced during this period had

³⁵ In 1861, Mapleson was at the Lyceum, not Her Majesty's. In 1868, he was briefly at Drury Lane before joining with Gye for two years. These various moves obfuscate Mapleson's programming of novelty and, for the sake of clarity, are omitted in these averages.

³⁶ Other outposts of the Italian opera circuit practiced a *stagione* system of programming, that is, the presentation of a single work at a time. When a new work met with immediate public favour, a continental impresario would run it for many consecutive nights of performance. In London, however, managers varied the fare nightly. Programming structure will be discussed in detail in chapter 5. Although this study will end with the year 1870, the tables show the repertoire through 1878 to illustrate its direction in the next period.

Table 2: Repertoire of Gye's company, 1861-78 by performance frequency

	1861	1862	1863	1864	1865	1866	1867	1868	1869	1870	1871	1872	1873	1874	1875	1876	1877	1878	Total
<i>Faust</i>	8	11	11	12	12	9	11	7	6	4	7	7	7	4	4	2	4	5	112
Don Giovanni	5	10	7	6	8	6	6	3	7	5	7	5	5	4	9	5	5	1	104
Il barbiere di Siviglia	10	8	4	5	5			3	2	3	5	4	6	6	3	3	3	3	97
Guillaume Tell	3	5	3	2	6	2		6	4	4	4	4	3	5	4	4	5	2	70
Les Huguenots	9	8	1	3	1	1	3	4	4	3	3	5	4	5	1	1	1	5	62
La sonnambula	4	3		3	2	3	2	2	9	3	1	9	4	3	2	3	2	2	52
Lucia di Lammermoor	3	2		3	2	4	4	5		3	5	2	2	2	1		5	3	46
La favorite	6	4		5	4	2	4	3		1	1	4	2	1	3	3	4	2	45
<i>Un ballo in Maschera</i>						7	5	4		3	3	4		1	5	6	3	3	44
Fra Diavolo	3	2	2		3			5	3	1	2	3	4	3	3	3	3	2	42
Rigoletto	2	4	3	4	3	2			1	1	2	3	2	5	1	2	3	4	42
Il trovatore						8	8	3		1	2	2	5	3	3	2		1	42
L'africaine	10	8	3	4	4	4			2	3	3	2	1	2	3	2		4	39
Le Prophète	3	1	2	2	2	3			2	3	3	2	1	2	3	5	3	2	37
La traviata	2	2	6	1	2	1		2	3	1	1	3	3	1	3	3	3	1	35
Martha				4	4	3				2	5	3	2	3	3	3	2	1	35
L'étoile du Nord						2	6			5	4	4	2		5	2			30
Le nozze di Figaro	1		4	5	3	7	3	1	1	1		1		2	1				30
Norma		3							3	2	4	3	2	3	3	2	3	1	29
Dinorah	3		2					3	2	3	1	1	1	5	3	2	4	2	28
I Puritani			2	3				4	1	5	2	1		1	3	1	1		24
La fille du régiment			2	3				4	3					1	1				22
Robert le diable	8	3	3	2				4	3					1	1				21
Masaniello	5	9	1				3						3		2				20
Die Zauberflöte									4	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	19
Hamlet									8	2	2	1	2	1	1	3	3		19
Don Pasquale	2	3	2	2	3	2		2	1	1		1	1		1	5			17
L'elisir d'amore															7	3	3	3	16
Lohengrin							7	4							3	1	1		16
Roméo et Giuliette	1					4				3				1	1			5	15
Lucrezia Borgia																			

(Table 2 continued)	1861	1862	1863	1864	1865	1866	1867	1868	1869	1870	1871	1872	1873	1874	1875	1876	1877	1878	Total
Tannhäuser																8	2	3	13
Linda di Chamounix				3				3				2	3	1			1		13
Der Freischütz												3	2	2	3			2	12
Mixed performance				1	5			1	1			1	2					1	12
Aida																5	3	3	11
Don Carlos						7	2												9
<i>Les diamants/couronne</i>													4	2	1				7
Otello			2								3		2						7
<i>Crispino e la comare</i>														2		1			7
La gazza ladra			3				1	3											6
Ernani													2	1				3	6
Il guarany												4		2					6
Semiramide														1	2			2	5
Fidelio								2	1			1			1				5
Esmeralda									4	1									5
Paul et Virginie																		4	4
<i>Le domino noir</i>							2												4
Gelmina												3							3
Stradella				3															3
Alma l'incantatrice																		2	2
<i>Le astuzie femminili</i>											2								2
<i>Der fliegende Holländer</i>																	2		2
Luisa Miller														2					2
<i>Die lustigen Weiber</i>																	2		2
<i>Mignon</i>														2					2
Santa Chiara																			2
<i>Médée</i>																			2
Don Bucefalo								1		2									1
Total	73	86	75	77	77	82	76	75	80	78	79	83	81	84	84	83	82	77	1432

Source: Author's database of Italian opera performances, 1861-78, based upon *The Times* and Gye diaries

Notes: Operas in bold were new to England. Operas in italics were new to the repertoire, but not new to England.

Total at bottom refers to the number of performances in the season. Total at right refers to the number of representations of a work in the entire period. Operas appear in order of most performed to least performed.

Table 3: Repertoire of Mapleson's company, 1861-78 by performance frequency

	1861	1862	1863	1864	1865	1866	1867	1868	1869	1870	1871	1872	1873	1874	1875	1876	1877	1878	Total
Faust		2	6	12	2	1	5	2	6	4	3	7	8	7	7	9	9	8	111
Les Huguenots		6	3	4	3	7	5	3	4	4	4	4	5	7	4	3	3	6	77
Lucia di Lammermoor		5	4	2	6	1	2	10	9	3	4	6	4	2	5	2	8	4	77
Il trovatore	2	18	8	7	3	3	3	3	1	1	1	5	3	5	2	1	5	3	74
Lucrezia Borgia	1	6	4	4	3	2	2	3	3	3	2	9	4	4	4	4	1		56
Don Giovanni	1	1	3			9	4	9	7	5				2	1	7	2	4	55
La sonnambula					7	3		1	4	3	13	6		2	3	2	4	5	53
Semiramide		7			2	3		1			4	6	7	5	4	5			44
Le nozze di Figaro		3	2		1	2	3	11		5		3	2	4	4	1		2	43
Martha	2	3		5		1	4	5	3	1		3	4	5	1	2	2	2	43
Norma	1	8	1	1	2	5	3	1	1	1	2	1	2	3	1	2	2		37
La traviata		2	2				6	3	2	3		4	2	1	3	2	3	5	36
Robert le diable		8		5	1	3		3	3		4					4	3	4	35
Fidelio				4	6	1	2	2	2	1	3	2		5	2	1		3	34
Il barbiere di Siviglia		2	2	1	1			1	4	6	1	1		1	6	3	2	1	32
Rigoletto				2				3	3	1	3	2	3	3	2	1	3	4	30
La fille du régiment			2					2	1	5	11	4				1	3		29
Die Zauberflöte					4	2	2	3	4	3			3				1	3	25
Un ballo in maschera	7	3	4		1					1									19
I Puritani	3	3	2			3			2	3							3	2	18
Lohengrin																			15
Il talismano																	2		15
Mixed performance	1			3	3	4		3	1										15
La favorite										3			6	4					13
Linda di Chamounix					5		1	1	3		2	1							13
Oberon			5	2		3	3												13
Don Pasquale		7							1	1		2							11
Dinorah						5			3	2								1	11

(Table 3 continued)	1861	1862	1863	1864	1865	1866	1867	1868	1869	1870	1871	1872	1873	1874	1875	1876	1877	1878	Total
Médée					5	1	1	2		2									11
Die Lustigen Weiber				8			2		8	2									10
Hamlet																			10
Carmen				9														9	9
Mireille																			9
Mignon						5	1					5			1				6
Der Freischütz								4	3										6
La gazza ladra									2	3									7
Guillaume Tell						4								4					5
Les diamants/ couronne																			4
Iphigénie en Tauride																			4
I Lombardi							4			4									4
Esmeralda										4									4
Anna Bolena											3								3
Otello																3			3
Ruy Blas																		3	3
La forza del destino							3												3
Niccolò de Lapi			3																3
Die Entführung/Serail						3													3
Fra Diavolo										3									3
Ernani						2													2
Le domino noir										2									2
L'étoile du Nord										2									2
Le Prophète									2										2
Le due giornate												1							1
La zingara	1																		1
L'africaine										1									1
Don Bucefalo									1										1
Total	17	81	66	69	55	73	56	73	80	78	60	67	55	76	62	54	62	72	1156

Source: Author's database of Italian opera performances, 1861-78, based upon *The Times*

several representations their first season but were revived only one additional season or never again.

What follows from these repertoire trends—the relative absence of novelty and the repetition of a limited group of popular works—is that the companies neglected contemporary musical developments. Instead, they continued to present predominantly Italian *opere serie* and *buffe*, Meyerbeerian *grand opéra*, and a limited selection of Verdi, the programming structure which had already been in place for the previous fifteen years. The graphic overviews presented in tables 4 and 5 serve as useful tools for introducing Gye and Mapleson's repertoire from 1861-78. These tables present different genres of repertoire as percentages of the total number of performances the impresario gave each year. This display facilitates the clear comparison and visualization of repertoire trends over time.³⁷ It also compensates for the fact that season lengths varied. Mapleson, for example, only presented thirteen performances of Italian opera during his first season, yet that number comprised nearly 80% of all performances, an important statistic to explain. Why such a preponderance of Italian opera that year when in all other years Italian opera only averaged 55% of his programme? A graphic view of each genre's proportional representation in the repertoire inspires such fundamental questions.

Dividing the repertoire of this, or any time period into discrete genres is no easy task, for it risks imposing crude and inexact typologies. Generally accepted stylistic categories in use today (*grand opéra*, *opéra comique*, *opera seria*, *Singspiel*) all give some indication of the structure, place and time of composition and even the content of a set of operatic works. Yet these labels become irrelevant when one considers productions in London translated and restructured to conform to Italian conventions. Why define *Les Huguenots* as a '*grand opéra*' and *L'étoile du Nord* as an '*opéra comique*' when, for the London production of the latter work, Gye commissioned Meyerbeer to replace spoken

³⁷ Since genre was critical to the way in which Victorian audiences and theatre professionals thought about individual works, it is useful to focus at first upon large-scale trends rather than the specific data that an opera was presented one year and not the next. The latter consideration is, of course, critical to this study. Subsequent chapters will engage with the repertoire at this level, but the broad generic picture provides an easier starting point.

Table 4: Gye repertoire structure, 1861-78

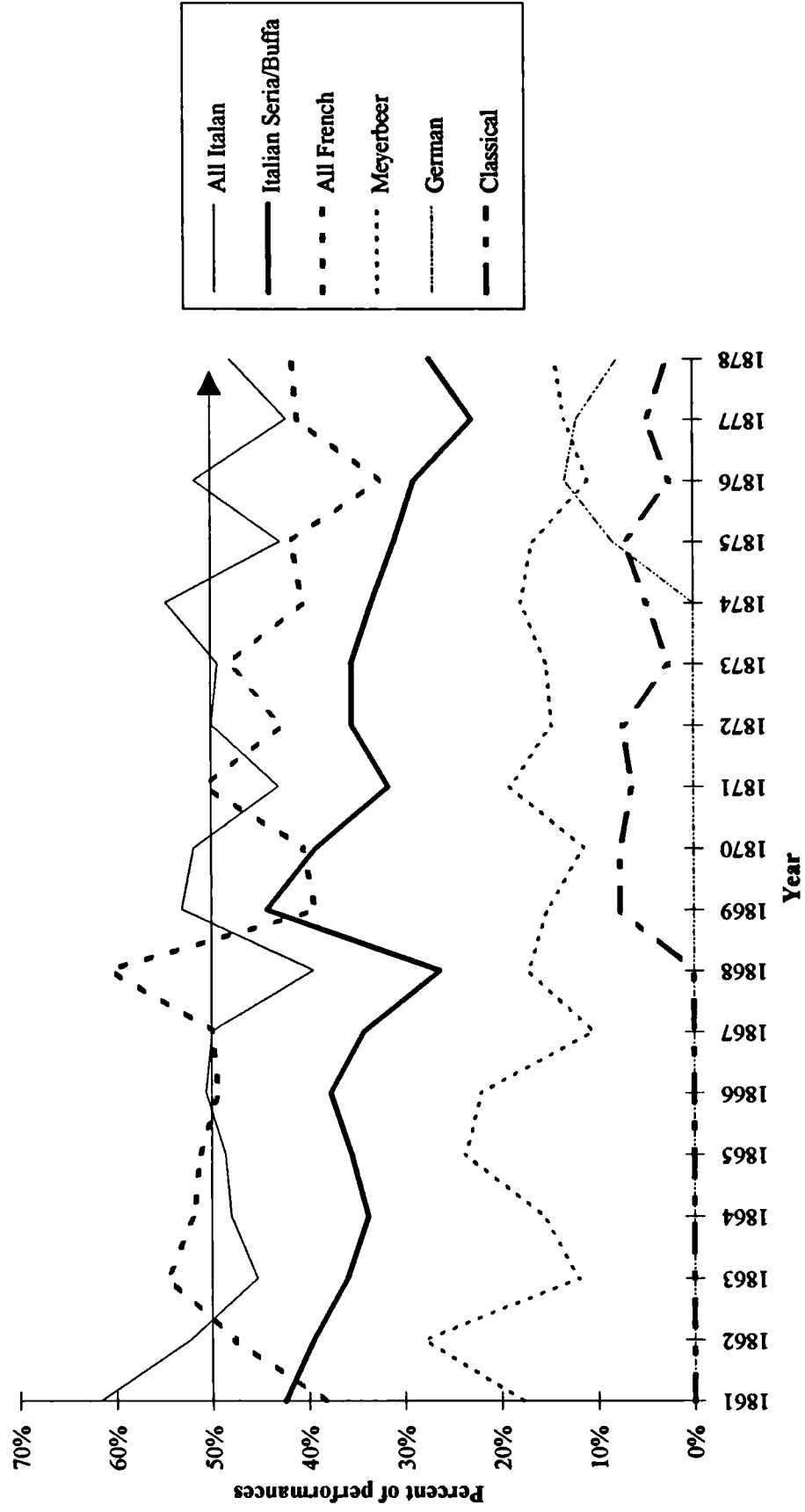
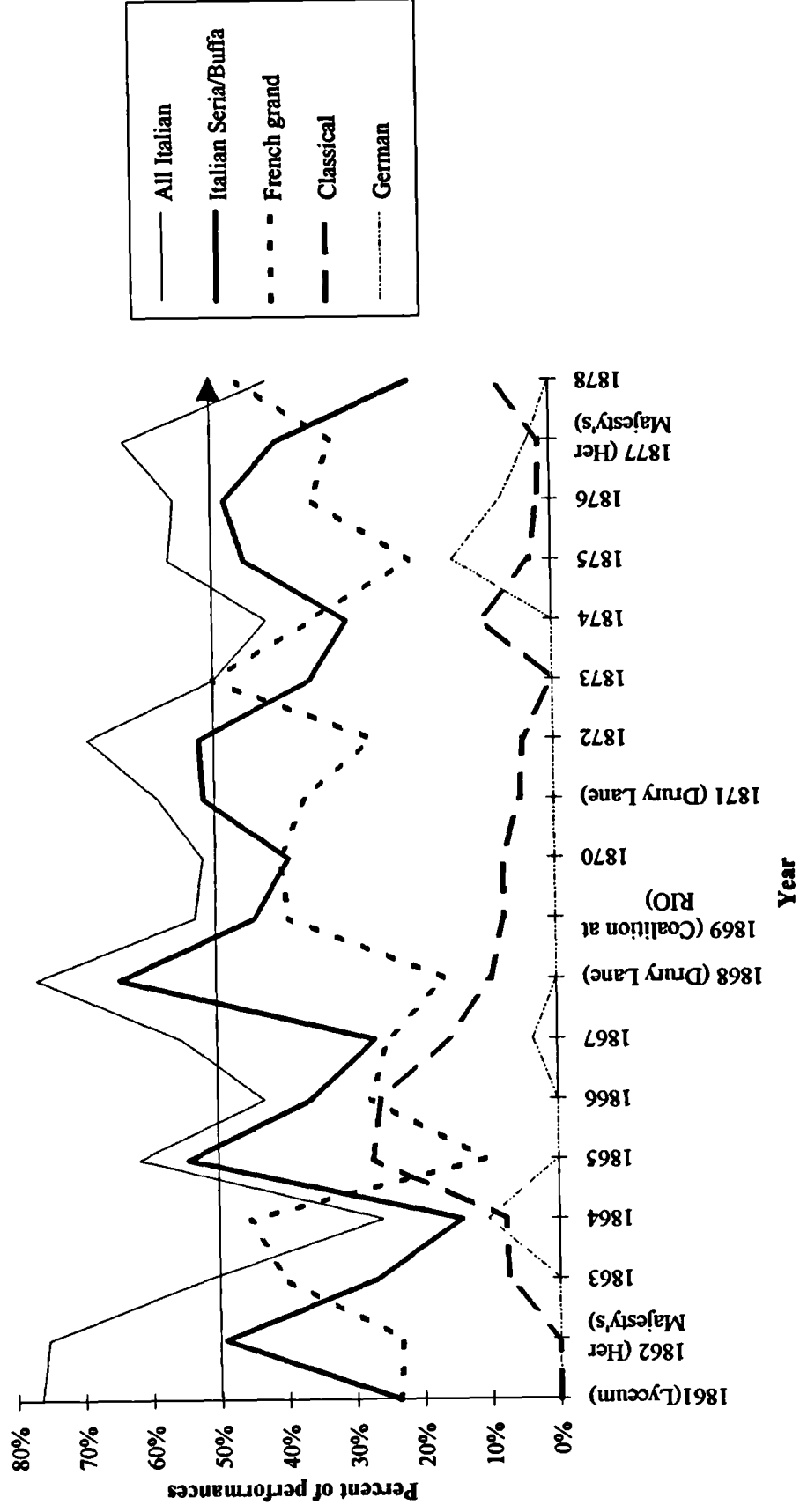


Table 5: Mapleson repertoire structure, 1861-78 (summer season only)



dialogue with accompanied recitative and to enhance smaller roles so that the work assumed the style of the composer's popular *grands opéras*?³⁸ Similar confusion surrounds the importation to London of works such as *Guillaume Tell* and *La favorite*, works written by Italian composers for French theatres but reworked into Italian versions by the composer. Are these works French or Italian? Should the answer depend upon which version the manager brought to London?

For the purpose of understanding programming trends of this period, it is most useful to classify works in accordance with contemporary Victorian conceptions of style. In the Mapleson schema, the top line (thin solid) represents the percentage of Mapleson's performances which were considered stylistically Italian. This category subdivides into two categories: Italian *opera seria* and *buffa*, considered together, and contemporary Italian opera.³⁹ The first of these, represented by the second line (thick solid), includes the Italianate works of Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti and Mozart (i.e., *Le nozze di Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*).⁴⁰ Despite the formal differences between *seria* and *buffa*, period criticism viewed them as equal exponents of the lyric Italian style and, from a manager's perspective, the works shared similar requirements in casts and musical resources. The second category, contemporary Italian opera, reflected in the differential between the top two lines, consists almost entirely of Verdi but also includes works of Antonio Cagnoni, Carlos Gomes, Francesco Schira and Federico and Luigi Ricci. The next line on this graph (small dashes) represents French opera and includes works by composers such as Meyerbeer and Gounod, either written as *grands opéras* or as *opéras-comiques* restructured or through-composed for London, and also works considered stylistically

³⁸ *Times*, 25 July 1864.

³⁹ The label '*opera seria*' was applied loosely, beyond its Metastasian associations, to embrace other heroic or tragic Italian genres of the early-nineteenth century such as *opera semiseria* and *melodramma serio*.

⁴⁰ The two Mozart works were seen as representative of the Italian *buffa* style; for example, *Don Giovanni* was an 'unequalled example of the genuine Italian school—"Italian" though composed by one of the most German of German musicians' (*Times*, 30 October 1865).

French such as *Martha*, *La fille du régiment*, *Guillaume Tell* and *La favorite*.⁴¹ In Gye's chart, Meyerbeerian opera is allocated its own line (small dashes), since it formed such a substantial part of the Royal Italian Opera repertoire. The next line on both charts (thick dashes) indicates works which contemporary Victorians would have considered to come from the so-called 'classical' repertoire and includes those of Beethoven, Weber, Gluck, Cimarosa, Cherubini and the Germanic works of Mozart (*Die Zauberflöte* and *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*). The bottom line represents 'modern' German opera—mostly Wagner but also Otto Nicolai and Duke Ernst II of Coburg-Gotha. For the sake of clarity, the very few contemporary English works which Mapleson presented are not included.⁴² These charts will be referred to throughout this study as the layers of institutional and industrial developments which influenced these programming patterns unfold.

Even a cursory consideration of Mapleson's repertoire will draw one's attention to the periodic surges in the different genres of repertoire: the classical repertoire in 1865, when he explicitly sought to inaugurate a revival of older works; and the French repertoire in 1863-64 with the introduction of Gounod to London, in 1869 when Mapleson co-managed the Royal Italian Opera and again in 1873 when he presented *Mignon* and *La favorite*. Most striking of all are the surges in the Italian repertoire which periodically brought the proportion of Italian works to over half of all his company's performances. The table illustrates that increases in performances of *opere serie* and *buffa*, not newly composed Italian works, drove these instances of sudden growth. A comparison of this table to the list of works which Mapleson produced each year (table 3) confirms that these spikes do not correlate to the introduction of new works; in 1865, Mapleson

⁴¹ *Martha*, a very popular work during this era, is especially difficult to categorize. Stylistically, it combines elements of Singspiel, *opéra comique* and *opera buffa*. Complicating the matter further, Flotow, a German based in Paris, composed *Martha* to a German libretto for the Vienna Kärntnertortheater. The work can be called German or French (for a long time Kobbé classified it as the latter) even though most performances of it historically have been in the accepted Italian translation. I have based my choice upon Victorian perceptions of the work: '[it] has no touch of Italian in it, and, indeed is nothing if not French' (*Times*, 25 May 1863).

⁴² These were limited to one performance of Balfe's *The Bohemian Girl* (*La zingara*) in 1862 and nine performances of Balfe's *Il talismano* in 1874.

produced *La sonnambula* for the first time, in 1868 *La gazza ladra* was new to his company, in 1871 *Anna Bolena*—all old works—and in 1875, he added no Italian operas to his repertoire. The revival of these works alone cannot fully account for the spikes since they were not performed that often. A more accurate account is that Mapleson repeated the same Italian works year after year and, periodically, he produced those works with great frequency. As Shaw described years later,

When one felt sure that [Italian opera] had been effectually squeezed out at last by French opera, or Hebraic opera, or what may be called operatic music-drama-- Lohengrin, for instance-- it would turn up again trying to sing Spirto gentil in the manner of Mario, raving through the mad scene in Lucia amid childish orchestral tootlings, devastating *Il Trovatore* with a totally obsolete style of representation, or in some way gustily rattling its unburied bones and wasting the manager's money and my patience....I have no doubt...that if Mr Mapleson were to start again tomorrow, he would announce Lucia and *Il Barbiere* and *Semiramide* with unshaken confidence in their freshness and adequacy.⁴³

This volatile shifts in Mapleson's programming and his preference for old Italian works over more current repertoire need to be explained.

The relatively straight lines of the chart representing Gye's repertoire structure reinforces the idea of a period with little programming change and this, too, must be examined further. A closer look reveals several notable small-scale trends, and significant differences from the programming of Mapleson's company. In the 1860s, Gye's repertoire consisted equally and exclusively of Italian and French repertoire. From 1861 to 1868, with the introduction of *Faust* in 1863, *L'africaine* in 1865, and *Roméo et Juliette*⁴⁴ in 1867, the popular French spectacles commanded 50% of all Gye's performances; at Mapleson's company, they comprised only 26% of all performances. *Opere serie* and *buffe* declined through these years from 42% to 28% of all Gye's performances while the programming of Verdi held consistently at 14%, about the same proportional representation as at Mapleson's company. The coalition in 1869 marked the

⁴³ Shaw, *Music in London*, 3:218.

beginning of gradual changes to the repertoire of the Royal Italian Opera—the first signs of change in over twenty years. For the first time in the new theatre, Gye began to present works from the classical repertoire. The Italian *bel canto* repertoire declined through the 1870s to as low as 23% of all performances in 1877, and the success of *Aida* in 1876 consolidated the reputation of Verdi, whose works grew to 21% of performances. Meyerbeer's operas fell slightly from earlier years, although four or five were still mounted each season. Repetitions of other French works declined through this decade and gave way to the presentation of Wagner's romantic operas. Mapleson's company essayed *Lohengrin* in 1875 but took German opera no further.

Towards an Explanation

One reason for the ossification of the repertoire in London during these decades was a general caesura in continental opera production. In the 1830s, 28 operas had travelled to multiple European houses shortly after their premières. By contrast, only nine works followed such a route in the 1860s and eight in the 1870s.⁴⁴ As Gye bemoaned in his 1867 prospectus, 'One of the greatest difficulties with which the Director of an opera has to contend is the procuring of absolutely new works to present to his subscribers.'⁴⁵ He noted that the composers who had stimulated repertoire growth in London during the 1830s and 1840s—Rossini, Donizetti, Bellini, Auber, Meyerbeer, the brothers Ricci and Verdi—were either dead, no longer writing or not writing as much. Verdi's output had decreased significantly from the period 1842-53, when he composed seventeen operas; after *La traviata*, his premières were spaced from two to five years apart, and from 1853-

⁴⁴ Comparison compiled from Alfred Lowenberg, *Annals of Opera: 1597-1940* (Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons, 1943). The source is limited in accuracy and scope but it serves the purpose of identifying major operas which met with immediate success. These figures do not include operas written during the 1860s and 1870s which reached Italian opera centres much later (e.g., *Die Meistersinger*), nor do they include operas written earlier which succeeded on Italian stages in these decades (e.g., *Lohengrin*). The figures also do not include operetta.

⁴⁵ Royal Italian Opera Prospectus, *Times*, 27 March 1867.

80, he composed only six new operas.⁴⁶ This was partly due to a change in Italian copyright laws in 1865—a change to which Verdi contributed in his capacity as a parliamentary senator—which enabled composers to earn royalties from future performances of their works instead of just a flat fee from a theatre the first time a work was performed. The economic necessity of producing works rapidly was therefore reduced.⁴⁷ Other Italian composers were either part of a reform movement (*scapigliatura*) which rejected traditional popular forms or were merely overshadowed by Verdi's immense success; Davison described other contemporary Italian composers as 'imitators who exaggerate what, with submission, may be cited as faults in Verdi's earlier time instead of emulating, to the best of their means, the genuine qualities belonging to his ripe maturity.'⁴⁸ The volatile political and economic climate on the Continent during these years, particularly surrounding the Austro-Italian and Franco-Prussian wars, may have also contributed to the slowdown in operatic development. Certainly, the political and economic instability in Italy threw the opera managements of Venice, Naples and other important centres into long crisis periods which discouraged the development of new works.⁴⁹ The rate of opera composition was beginning to increase in Russia but these works were not exported, in part due to tense diplomatic relationships and to a lack of international copyright conventions. The spectacular failure of *Tannhäuser* at the Opéra in 1861 cast a long pall over the production of Wagner music drama in Paris and also in London, which looked to the French capital to inform musical taste.

Supporting this explanation, the repertoire of other Italian opera houses on the Continent shared the same fate as London, although not all to the same degree. Certainly, this was the case in Paris, the opera centre to which the impresarios travelled

⁴⁶ This figure does not include *Aroldo*, the 1857 reworking of *Stiffelio*, or the 1869 revised version of *La forza del destino* for La Scala.

⁴⁷ Rosselli, *Opera Industry* and 'Verdi and the Business of Opera,' lecture at the Royal Opera House Verdi Festival, 11 June 1995. The effect of these laws will be examined at greater length in chapter 4.

⁴⁸ *Times*, 4 December 1877. See also 'Italy,' *New Grove Opera*, 2:853-54.

⁴⁹ 'Naples' and 'Venice,' in *New Grove Opera*, 3:555-56 and 4:918-19.

most frequently to hear new works to bring to London. At the Théâtre Italien in the 1860s under Torribio Calzado and then Prosper Bagier, an average of only two works out of fourteen produced were new each season. In the turbulent 1870s, when the theatre was managed alternately by the financially insecure Amédée Verger, Maurice Strakosch and Prosper Bagier and then by Léon Escudier before closing in 1878, only one work out of ten performed each season was new. The operas repeated each year were the same as in London—*Rigoletto*, *Trovatore*, *Traviata*, *Barbiere*, *Lucia*, *Sonnambula*—with the exception of the French *grands opéras* and *opéras-comiques* which were produced by the Opéra and Opéra-Comique. As in London, most of the novelties—Donizetti's *Il furioso all'isola di San Domingo* (1833) and *La regina di Golconda* (1828) and Paisiello's *La serva padrona* (1781)—were not 'new' in the sense of 'recently composed' and these as well as some genuinely new operas failed to take hold with the public.⁵⁰ It follows that if English impresarios depended on continental, specifically Parisian performances for discovering new works and these houses performed only a limited number of new works themselves, some of which failed, then the number of new works which would travel to London was bound to be slimmer.

Some continental opera houses attempted more innovative responses to the slowdown in composition. The Madrid Teatro Real, another Italian opera house, was founded in 1850 and quickly amassed a repertoire of 35 works in its first four seasons, most by Rossini, Donizetti, Verdi and Meyerbeer. As with other opera centres, the pace slowed to a trickle in the late 1850s and the seasonal average for each of the two following decades was two new operas out of nineteen performed. Interestingly, in the 1870s, the theatre incorporated operas written by native composers such as Emilio Arrieta and Ruperto Chapí who combined aspects of Italian grand opera with zarzuela.⁵¹ In Vienna, the Hofoper enjoyed many new entertainments each season in the 1830s and

⁵⁰ For a performance history of the Théâtre Italien see Jacques Gheusi's serialized 'Histoire du Théâtre des Italiens de Paris,' *L'avant-scène opera* (Paris: L'avant-scène, September 1983-July 1984). The July 1984 issue 84-107 refers specifically to this period.

⁵¹ Don Luis Carmona y Millán, *Cronica de la Ópera Italiana en Madrid* (Madrid: Manuel Minuesa de los Ríos, 1878).

1840s; in 1844, for example, there were eight new operas and 43 additional *divertissements*, ballets or new productions of established operas. This pace, too, slowed in the 1850s and, in the following two decades, an average of two to three new works were produced each year, integrating operetta and new German works into the repertoire. Of course, the company moved to the new house on the Ringstrasse in 1869 where all works in the repertoire had to be newly produced—perhaps supplanting the necessity to bring out new works and certainly consuming available funds.⁵² Vienna was not alone: a number of major houses were built or reconstructed during this period, most notably the Academy of Music (New York, 1854), Bol'shoi (Moscow, 1856), Teatro Colon (Buenos Aires, 1857), Royal Italian Opera (London, 1858), Mariinsky (St. Petersburg, 1860), Her Majesty's Theatre (London, 1869), and Palais Garnier (Paris, 1875). These opera houses were for the most part built large, to accommodate the new middle class audience.⁵³ The major building campaigns of this period may have affected a shift in priorities for the respective opera companies towards reproducing quickly the works of Rossini, Donizetti and Meyerbeer which guaranteed filled houses and attractive financial returns. Works with long-standing popularity thus achieved a new lease on life and their presentation extended for a longer period than they may have otherwise remained in vogue.

The continental slowdown in new repertoire provides one part of an explanation for the programming in London during this period. This problem of diminished output will be revisited in greater detail throughout this study.⁵⁴ This phenomenon taken alone, however, does not completely clarify repertoire development, because it explains neither the small-scale trends evident in tables 4 and 5, nor why Mapleson and Gye chose to present particular works over others. The 'supply-side' perspective reveals that

⁵² Franz Hadamowsky, *Das Wiener Hoftheater* (Vienna: Verlag Brüder Hollinek, 1975), 2:628.

⁵³ Rosselli, *Opera Industry*, 171-72 and 'Italy: the Decline of a Tradition,' in Samson, *Late Romantic Era*, 128.

⁵⁴ Further work is needed in this area. Specifically, a comparative study which examines the artistic policies of a range of opera institutions and music publishers as well as the output of marginal composers during this period will help to illuminate some of the reasons for an international freeze in composition.

programming options were limited, but does not inform why the managers adopted certain approaches to enlivening the repertoire instead of others. Why not integrate works of other schools, commission new operas or revive forgotten corners of the repertoire? This partial explanation also does not address the fact that Gye and Mapleson perennially announced new works but did not produce them. When one maps the trajectory of repertoire performed to institutional and industrial developments, richer and more complete explanations for their choices and behaviour emerge.

Part 2

Opera Management and Programming, 1861-67

Chapter 3

Management Strategies Amidst A Venue Crisis

The problem of finding, creating or renovating a theatre suitable for opera performance has, in many respects, defined the history of opera in London. From the struggles of the King's Theatre and Pantheon Opera in the late eighteenth-century to the redevelopment scheme of the Royal Opera House in the present day, few issues have vexed opera managers more. The mid-nineteenth century exemplified this recurring trend profoundly; indeed, it constituted an era of unparalleled turmoil. By the end of 1856, Her Majesty's Theatre fell into the hands of an eccentric proprietor and was encumbered with many property boxes, two factors which rendered the theatre unattractive to prospective impresarios. The Royal Italian Opera lay in ruins. In 1867, Her Majesty's, too, burned to the ground. The venue crisis in London and its attendant financial problems lay at the heart of opera management and therefore serves as a backdrop to the artistic developments and institutional practices of the 1860s. This chapter is the first of three which focuses specifically on the years 1861-67. A detailed history of the reconstruction of the Royal Italian Opera precedes a discussion of how this project threw Gye into a degenerative financial crisis and shaped his management strategies. An examination of Mapleson's desperate attempts to secure a suitable venue and of his own approach to management, quite different from Gye's, will follow. The conclusion to this chapter, as well as subsequent chapters, will consider the direct implications of these problems for the two managers' artistic policies.

A New House and New Debt

The scheme to rebuild the Royal Italian Opera after the fire of March 1856 created a formidable yoke of debt for Gye. The financial details of this project, documented here for the first time with new source material, comprise one of the key causes of the instability which plagued the Covent Garden Theatre for the next forty years. Within a week of the calamity, Gye negotiated to move his company to the Lyceum for the approaching season, only a few weeks away. As a letter from Gye to his conductor Michael Costa makes clear, he was able to mobilize quickly only because his leading singers agreed to perform for one quarter of their salaries and Torribio Calzado, manager of the Théâtre Italien, lent him the scores and parts he needed for several operas.¹ The small size of the Lyceum stage and auditorium discounted the possibility of presenting opera there on a permanent basis. The stage was only 34' wide at the proscenium and 41' deep, as opposed to the former Royal Italian Opera stage, which measured 46' x 56'. Gye specifically expressed concern to the Prince of Wales about the auditorium's 'limited accommodation.'² In preparing the theatre for opera performances, he expected to fit 50 boxes in addition to 770 places in the stalls, pit and amphitheatre. By contrast, the former Royal Italian Opera had 188 boxes and held 1,115 in the public spaces.³

The neighbouring Lyceum was not a viable long-term solution for Gye's venue problem, nor was a rebuilt theatre on the Duke of Bedford's Covent Garden site; the

¹ Gye letter to Costa, 25 March 1856, Item 7 in MC Papers; GD, 14 March 1856 ff. Grüneisen alleges 'that capital and materials of the old theatre were used and turned to account in the Lyceum and second Royal Italian Opera adventure,' but the diaries and other observers suggest all the property was destroyed (Grüneisen, 27). Some English opera score material was auctioned after the fire, but no mention is made of surviving Italian opera music, sets or costumes (Diana Barron, 'Covent Garden Auction Sale, 1856,' *Theatre Notebook* 19 [1964], 1:30).

² Letter to Charles Phipps, 29 March 1856, PP Vic. A167, Royal Archives, Windsor Castle. I wish to acknowledge the gracious permission of Her Majesty The Queen to make use of this and other material from the Royal Archives. See also *Builder*, 16 October 1847, 489-90, and *Survey of London*, 35:94, 97.

³ GD, 14 March 1856; *Survey of London*, 35:98. A sketch depicting the auditorium during a Royal Italian Opera performance suggests that he squeezed more boxes into the space: 14 in the ground tier, 23 in the first tier, 21 in the second tier and 8 in the third tier (*Illustrated London News*, 19 April 1856).

various proprietors of the theatre lacked funds. The Duke repossessed their lease on 10 April 1856 by court order, however, which enabled him to grant a lease to Gye as sole proprietor.⁴ Yet Gye was not committed to rebuilding there, for he, too, lacked funds. In the days immediately following the fire, he considered a government-sponsored national project at a more prestigious site:

Went to the Palace saw Col [Charles] Phipps [treasurer to the Prince of Wales] - told him of my plan of building a new Theatre - That I thought the Government might give or let at a low rental a piece of ground for a Theatre & Concert rooms for the purpose half the year of National English Opera & half for foreign opera - Col P. said of course National English Opera was all nonsense - I said yes but it would quiet the popular feeling about encouragement to foreigners - I suggested the site of Trafalgar Square - where the National Gallery now stands & thought such a building would be just the thing for such a spot.⁵

Other possibilities which Gye pursued seriously included a theatre in Pimlico near Buckingham Palace and one at the centre of Leicester Square.⁶ He also discussed buying the lease of Her Majesty's from Lord Ward, but the asking price of £100,000 proved prohibitive.⁷

As negotiations for alternative sites broke down, Gye still proved reluctant to rebuild the theatre at the Covent Garden site, concerned that an opera venture could not promise the profits which would allow him to raise sufficient funds for construction. He told the Bedford Office, 'I could not get money to build an opera house alone-- but must continue other buildings with it.'⁸ His original proposal in October of 1856, therefore, was to

⁴ *Survey of London*, 35:81. At the time of the fire, five theatre proprietors shared ownership of the Davenant patent and the existing lease, which had 39 years unexpired. The diaries reveal that the Duke offered a new lease for 85 years to Gye two days after the proprietors admitted their poor finances; that is, before the Duke had actually reclaimed the site (GD, 17 March 1856).

⁵ GD, 8 March 1856; *DNB*, s.v. 'Phipps, Sir Charles Beaumont.'

⁶ GD, 10 March to 6 April 1856. See also correspondence between Sir Benjamin Hall and Colonel Charles Phipps, 9 and 10 March 1856, Addl. Mss. Q.291-294, Royal Archives.

⁷ GD, 21 and 25 June 1856.

⁸ GD, 4 August 1856.

build only a concert room and flower market at the Covent Garden site and not a proper theatre for opera. On 25 February 1857, Gye signed a 90-year lease for the site, but agreed to build an opera house only after one of his principal creditors, Richard Webb, assured him that he could raise the necessary sum from an insurance office.⁹ A prospective contractor for the project, Charles Lucas, warned Gye that such a funding method would 'eat me up with Interest & life insurance.' Instead, he suggested a more lenient arrangement akin to the one used to construct St. James' Hall earlier that year, another Lucas project: 'he said there would be no difficulty of getting 12 persons to subscribe the money (they said £60,000 would do all) at £5,000 each to take £5 per cent with liberty to me to pay off gradually, particularly if I could give them a box each.' Lucas' offer to assume two of these shares himself and to find investors to take the others helped him to win the contract for this lucrative project.¹⁰

In mid-September, as construction was ready to begin, Edward Barry, the architect of the project, informed Gye of Lucas' final estimate: 'This amounted to £56,996 - to this there will be B[arry]'s commission, & other things, which with £7,500 for the Flower Market will bring it up to £70,000 - that is £10,000 more than they before said.'¹¹ Gye himself found most of the financial contributors from among his business associates (next page):

⁹ GD, 25 February and 12 March 1857. The date given in the *Survey of London* (35:81) for the signing of the lease, 18 February 1857, is incorrect; the proposal was drafted on that date. See also Indenture between Charles Parker and Frederick Gye, 7 June 1858, mimeograph copy 10 July 1914, ROHA.

¹⁰ GD, 22 June 1857. Gye had looked into financial support from the Queen but none was forthcoming (Letter to Charles Phipps, 29 March 1856, Royal Archives).

¹¹ GD, 10 September 1857.

Contributor	Relationship to Gye	Amount of Contribution
Francis Duke of Bedford	Landlord	£10,000
Charles and Thomas Lucas	Building Contractors	£10,000
Richard James Webb	Creditor	£10,000
Alpheus Billings	Unknown	£5,000
Frederic Ouvry	Banker at Coutts & Co.	£5,000
Edward Marjoribanks and Sir Edmund Antrobus	Bankers at Coutts & Co.	£5,000
Augustus Meyrick	Friend of Gye	£5,000
Brownlow Knox	Business Associate in the Royal Italian Opera	£5,000 lowered to £1,000 and then recanted
William Coulthurst	Banker at Coutts & Co.	£1,000
Sir George Armytage	Friend of Gye	£1,000
Henry Turner	Friend of Armytage	£1,000
Henry Wickham	Friend of Armytage	£1,000
Edward Barry	Architect	£1,000

For each share of £5,000, Gye allowed the use of a box on subscription nights for a period of twelve years and for £1,000, he ceded a stall. He was to pay these contributors 5% interest, and, beginning in 1859, 10% of the principal per annum.¹² Gye's speculation differed from the more popular scheme of selling shares in a theatre to the general public. His method allowed money to be raised much more quickly and concentrated power in his hands alone, not those of a diffuse body of shareholders. This funding drive was also fortunately timed: a commercial panic at the end of 1857 would have discouraged investment in the undertaking.

The project did not escape financial complication. By the beginning of 1858, Webb, the first to pledge, had still not paid his share. In fact, for three years, he would promise on a weekly, and later, even daily basis to advance Gye the low-interest loan. Led by these promises, Gye was unable to clear himself of old debts dating from before the reconstruction. He was therefore obliged to renew £4,500 of 3-month bills for which

¹² This information corrects the imprecise and, in some cases, aggregated figures related to the contribution scheme provided in the *Survey of London*. The amounts related here appear in the diaries and, in a format incorporating later subscription changes, in PRO, *Meyrick v. Gye, Coulthurst, Marjoribanks and Wing* C16/657/M55, fols. 3 and 17. The allocation of property boxes or free admission was a widespread practice for attracting contributions to a new theatre or entertainment venture (see English Opera Association Prospectus, *Times*, 12 March 1864).

Webb levied a crippling 20% interest.¹³ More vexing for Gye, the Bedford Office mandated additional, expensive changes to the original construction plan, most notably the columned portico in Bow Street. Instead of borrowing more money and ceding more boxes to increase the funds already subscribed, Gye raised £25,000 through a preferential mortgage with the Rock Assurance office. As security for this loan, Gye insured his life for £10,000.¹⁴ The house was finished the day of its scheduled opening on 15 May 1858 and, allegedly, £100,000 were bet on whether or not it would be completed in time.¹⁵

In spite of a successful first season, Gye's financial prospects continued to deteriorate. That autumn, shortly before work on the Floral Hall began, Lucas delivered an £85,341 bill for the theatre and a £27,000 estimate for the Floral Hall. Gye had realized that costs were escalating, but this invoice was still a tremendous blow considering that the original appraisal was less than £60,000 for both.¹⁶ To raise these extra sums, Gye proposed that the contributors subscribe additional money equal to one half of their original contribution, an arrangement most of them accepted. In exchange, Gye permitted the use of their boxes and stalls for the full season, instead of just the

¹³ Coutts ledgers, 1857–61. The discounting of bills was a common form of raising credit in nineteenth-century businesses (L. S. Pressnell and John Orbell, *A Guide to the Historical Records of British Banking* [Aldershot: Gower, 1985], xxiii–xxiv). Though necessary, Gye tried to minimize his dependence on this system because of the high interest involved and short-term pressure to repay them; as he told his bankers with reference to Webb's bills, 'they kept me in constant anxiety & hot water' (GD, 2 August 1861). Given Webb's difficulties, Gye re-apportioned one of Webb's £5,000 shares to Joseph Maynard, Lucas' solicitor, and agreed that his other promised share would be an ordinary loan (GD, 21 April 1858).

¹⁴ GD, 3 March 1858. Gye also convinced the Duke of Bedford to raise his share by £5,000. In appealing directly to the Duke, however, Gye incurred the hostility of the Bedford Office steward Charles Parker for years to come (GD, 3 to 10 November 1858; *DNB*, s.v. 'Parker').

¹⁵ *Illustrated London News*, 22 May 1858, cited in Wyndham, 221.

¹⁶ By the time Lucas gave the bill (12 November 1858), Gye had expected the theatre would cost a total of £80,000 (GD, 7 September 1858). The new amount created considerable friction. Gye's acquiescence to the inflated bill may be explained in part by the fact that his bank advised him that the property was well worth it (GD, 21 October 1858). The *Survey of London* follows the originally quoted cost of construction—'a contract figure of £60,000 plus another £10,000 for extra works, its cost was less than half that of its predecessor'—without considering that the actual costs were greater (35:82). It also does not give a figure for the Floral Hall construction.

subscription nights.¹⁷ The Lucas brothers pushed further for the right 'to sell all their admissions - a most unfair proceeding - I told them...it was putting the screw on me....I said it was against all my principals - They argued for 4 hours continually saying when I refused that the work must stop - at last I consented to allow them to sell.'¹⁸ Gye's enormous debt to the contributors enabled the recurrence of similar impositions in future years. After this second round of contributions, Gye still needed funds so he borrowed £5,000 from his bank and, after a comparatively poor 1859 season, another £9,000 to help meet singers' salaries and one year's interest due to the contributors.¹⁹ At the outset of the 1860s, therefore, after one takes into account Gye's old debts from before 1856, the contributions and mortgages to fund construction and further loans from his bank and creditors, the impresario owed a total of £145,000.²⁰ Gye soon established a pattern of failing to repay the agreed portion of the contributors' principal each season, which quickly gave way to an inability to pay even the interest accumulating on the principal.

The 1861 season heralded for Gye what seemed to be a period of renewed artistic vitality and financial success. For only the second time in his thirteen years as manager and for the first time in his new theatre, he enjoyed a clear monopoly over Italian opera after the collapse of E. T. Smith's company. The first two months were, indeed, full of promise as the combination of *Le Prophète*, *Guillaume Tell* and the sensational début performances of Adelina Patti in *La sonnambula* brought greater accolades and financial reward than was usual for the beginning of a season. In the previous two seasons, in a competitive situation, the company's gross income averaged £17,940 during these

¹⁷ GD, 21 October 1858; 'Frederick Gye and Henry Grissell, Basis of Arrangement relative to 3 Stalls in the Royal Italian Opera House,' 10 January 1859, Item 25 in Covent Garden Third Theatre History, ROHA.

¹⁸ GD, 11 December 1858.

¹⁹ GD, 29 July 1859. As security for these loans, Gye had to take out new life insurance policies for the first and to assign the wardrobes for the second.

²⁰ Old debts included bank loans taken in the early 1850s to help him through the rough early stages of his management (Coutts ledgers; Dideriksen, 'Repertory and Rivalry').

months but as the only operation in town, it was £24,421.²¹ With this boon, Gye gave highest priority to clear Webb's short-term bills and in 1861 he borrowed £5,000 from his bank to do so: 'paid all the bills Webb has of mine....Thank Heaven!'²² This relief transformed to concern as he turned to confront the larger debt to the contributors. Fortunately for Gye, during the 1862 season foreign and provincial tourists flooded London for the International Exhibition; Patti sang in over half of the performances; and Mapleson's venture at Her Majesty's Theatre was still in an embryonic state. These factors combined to produce Gye's longest and most financially successful season since 1851, the year of the original International Exhibition, and enabled him to pay the contributors all the interest accumulated up to May 1861.²³

One successful year, however, did nothing to prevent the contributors from demanding the interest due to them the next. Several of them, such as his bankers and landlord, showed leniency towards Gye because of their business relationship; others, such as the Lucas brothers, pressed him hard each year. As was their right, these creditors threatened to sell their investment in the theatre to someone more hostile to Gye or to start a movement to wrest the theatre from him altogether. His agreement with them had stipulated, after all, that if he failed to pay interest and to indemnify 10% of the principal each year, the contributors could take possession of the mortgaged property and appoint a new manager.²⁴ These threats thrust Gye into an awkward position: he had to placate hostile parties, usually by paying them preferentially or granting them further box privileges, but he also had to avoid any appearance of preferential treatment which could provoke hostile action from other contributors.

²¹ Coutts ledgers, 1858-61.

²² GD, 1 August 1861 and 14 January 1862.

²³ Gye explicitly acknowledged the pre-eminence of the 1851 and 1862 seasons in his prospectus for 1867, the year of the French International Exhibition (*Times*, 16 March 1867). Patti was in London for 74 of the season's 86 performances and sang in 38 of them.

²⁴ PRO, *Meyrick v. Gye*, fol. 11.

Coulthurst and Robinson of Coutts & Co., as Gye's major creditors and most valued financial advisers, usually helped Gye to develop appropriate solutions.

Such threats from contributors were particularly unsettling in 1863, a vulnerable time for Gye. Despite the triumph of *Faust* at the Royal Italian Opera, the opera season met with little success as receipts plummeted £9,200 from the previous season to £59,232; dismayed, Gye stopped the season a week earlier than planned and searched for explanations:

Tonight closes the Opera Season of 1863, which has been disappointing up-hill work - altho the Subscription has been nearly the same as last season, the nightly admissions have fallen off dreadfully - The war in America has doubtless kept the rich Americans and also the great manufacturers away - There is no doubt a general reduction of visitors to London as so many came to the Exhibition last year.²⁵

His finances were squeezed further that year as he spent nearly £3,000 to purchase the lease of Springfield, his home on Wandsworth Road, and additional sums to construct new rooms. These actions, compounded with Gye's failure to pay interest, provoked the contributors' accusations of extravagance.²⁶ A paucity of funds in the first few months of 1864 allowed him to satisfy only his most difficult creditors, but a prosperous 1864 season enabled him to commence a regular schedule of interest payments in January 1865.²⁷ Through weekly payments of £120 during the opera season and £60 at other times, Gye paid one year's interest of £4,200 to the contributors by 1866 and a year later he had paid all interest through May 1863, in addition to other debts. These payments

²⁵ GD, 1 August 1863.

²⁶ GD, 19 January, 31 July 1863. Gye moved to Springfield in 1848, presumably for its proximity to the Vauxhall Gardens, one of his business interests. He had the opportunity to purchase the lease in 1857 but did not because of his expenditures on the new opera house. He reported spending £10,000 on the additions in 1863 but it is difficult to verify this figure in his bank account. Gye defended new construction at Springfield by claiming the necessity of entertaining business associates (GD, 31 July and 27 August 1863).

²⁷ *The Times* called the season 'the most brilliant and the most prosperous' (1 August 1864) but the Coutts ledgers reveal that the 1862 season was in fact more financially remunerative.

should not be construed as a sign of Gye's improving financial status, however. In order to pay his bank and creditors £68,267 between 1861 and 1867, he needed to secure £33,336 in new loans which, in turn, accumulated interest each year. No outlay was put towards the original mortgages on the opera house and, in borrowing to pay what amounted to new loans and interest, Gye actually increased his debt. Far from improving, Gye's financial situation approached crisis. After a concert series in his theatre failed after the 1867 season, payments to the contributors stopped. That autumn, Gye overdrew his bank account for the first time ever. His bankers, concerned that he now owed £50,000 to their institution alone, forced him to insure his life for £24,000, since he had few assets he had not already pledged as security for loans. Such a large policy increased his annual premiums and exacerbated his financial situation further.²⁸

Gye's Management Strategies

Despite these acute financial pressures, Gye managed to keep his creditors at bay during this period. His strong and long-standing business relationships with a corps of generous creditors enabled him to delay payments in good faith, albeit with the penalty of additional interest, and also to continue borrowing to indemnify more sensitive lenders. Gye benefited from seeking loans from businesses (e.g., Coutts and Mitchell) which profited from the institutional health of the Royal Italian Opera and were large enough that extending credit did not hurt their own financial standing. As opposed to individual lenders, such businesses would characteristically be more inclined to tolerate a missed payment to help a venture vital to their firms' interests. Part of Gye's appeal to his backers may have been his forthright and professional approach to a business otherwise

²⁸ GD, 13 November 1867. Gye maintained that the missed payments were a result of his having lost £2,500 rent in the autumn concert season. Analysis of the Coutts ledgers shows that the new life insurance policies increased Gye's premium payments by £1,017 over the average amount paid from 1861-67 (£2,971).

plagued by scheming 'blackguards'.²⁹ Rather than promise payment and then renege amidst a flurry of bluffs and excuses, Gye usually told his creditors when he did not have funds available to pay them and when he expected he would. Gye's diaries and banking ledgers suggest further that once he secured credit, he managed his finances meticulously, and this instilled a sense of trust in his creditors. The financial outcome of individual seasons may have created turbulence, but the fact that Gye weathered these vicissitudes and operated for nearly twenty years in the opera business without overdrawing his account is a credit to his management.³⁰ Finally, despite the massive debt facing his company, Gye operated from a position of strength. His role as proprietor—and not simply manager—of the Royal Italian Opera enhanced his ability to confront his creditors directly and combatively: 'W[illiamson] said that one of the contributors could crush me if he liked - I said if hostile proceedings were taken they would force me to take all my engagements, costumes &c &c to Her Majesty's Theatre.'³¹ The creditors may have had jurisdiction over the ownership of the building and its machinery, but the engagements and the costumes and music within the theatre belonged to Gye and he could do what he pleased with them. He was a formidable enough manager that creditors clearly felt that their stake in the Covent Garden Theatre was more secure with his assets in it, and with him running it, than if he were to operate in opposition to them.

Gye may have succeeded in postponing his debt payments, but it is important to question why his business was not making enough money to enable him to fulfill them. Was it structurally difficult to make money from an opera company during this period or was Gye simply not successful in managing one? The bank ledgers for Frederick Gye's Royal Italian Opera account, stored in the archives of Coutts & Co., provide the answer.

²⁹ 'Blackguards' is Gye's term, which he applied to many individuals at one time or another (GD, 23 March 1859, 14 March 1865).

³⁰ On 5 August 1867, Gye describes his overdraft of £400 as 'a thing I never did before' and the financial ledgers support this claim.

³¹ GD, 11 January 1865.

These lists of payments and receipts enable a financial analysis conducted at a level of detail rare for a musical institution (table 6). On average, income from the opera season amounted to over £63,000 per season.³² Expenses for running the opera season came to nearly £56,000, or 88% of receipts. More precisely, as the summary percentages (which appear after the financial statements) illustrate, costs for an opera season escalated in the early 1860s—from 82% of receipts in 1861 to 94% in 1863—and Gye evidently tried to curb this trend; later chapters will examine this more fully. Major cost components included singers (32% of receipts on average); 'sundries,' a catch-all category Gye used to denote cash withdrawals to pay for opera-related materials, services and personnel (24%); orchestra (11%); Costa (2%); and newspaper advertisements (2%). The category of 'other business-related expenses' included wages for some employees and payments to suppliers and came to roughly 16% of operating receipts.³³ In addition to these variable costs, Gye faced substantial fixed costs: ground rent, taxes and insurance amounted to £5,563, or 9% of the receipts of an opera season. On average, then, associated expenses for the opera season came to 97% of receipts. Gye's salary, cash withdrawals and

³² See explanatory note, Appendix B. This total includes all receipts (exclusive of new loans) from March through August. This method may include some English opera receipts from March performances and concert series receipts from March and concert receipts from August. Indeed, in his diaries, Gye puts average income at 'over £60,000' (10 July 1865), which probably suggests between £60,000 and £61,000, but my method yields £63,286. Given the relative proportions of opera income and other income during these months, however, it is safe to assume that the latter was minimal and constant; changes in receipts during these months are therefore useful indicators of the relative success or failure of the opera season.

³³ Here again, the ledgers are somewhat unclear and it is necessary to make consistent hypotheses. A 'Wages' category referred to Gye's wages, not those of his staff. Some of Gye's employees (e.g., repetiteur, copyist, dress-maker, stage manager) appear as individual line items in some years but not others. For some of the payments to businesses, it is impossible to know exactly what service that business provided. For example, Burnett & Co. was a distiller, and assumedly supplied the house with its liquor—but perhaps some of these deliveries were for the personal use of the Gye family at Springfield (1858 Post Office Directory, Coutts & Co. Archives). To determine opera-related expenses, I have included all wage and business-related expenses incurred during the opera season. For those in the months outside of the season, I have included only those expenses which are clearly opera-related, such as payments to the stage manager which occurred year round. The category of 'other expenses' noted in the financials, then, are the miscellaneous expenses which I have assumed are not related to the running of the opera season.

Table 6: Royal Italian Opera financial statements, 1861-70

	1861	1862	1863	1864	1865	1866	1867	1868	1869	1870
Opera season receipts	67,407	68,432	59,232	66,195	64,099	59,565	58,071	43,780	85,107	63,161
Other receipts	6,824	7,135	6,688	5,523	7,035	7,729	3,502	2,200	26,725	8,621
Total receipts	74,231	75,567	65,920	71,718	71,134	67,294	61,573	45,980	111,832	71,782
Opera expenses	55,209	58,990	55,705	57,836	57,993	52,506	49,686	46,061	53,108	50,581
Singers	21,041	20,672	20,571	22,287	21,367	19,133	17,358	15,854	19,528	19,119
Band	6,860	7,511	6,769	7,340	7,128	7,292	6,865	6,921	7,548	6,550
Conductor	1,350	1,500	1,200	1,800	1,200	1,800	1,800	1,600	1,445	1,020
Sundries	13,770	16,885	15,619	16,275	15,480	14,119	14,320	13,077	18,240	16,586
Newspapers	1,014	1,432	912	1,474	1,447	934	1,176	983	1,336	896
Other business-related	11,174	10,990	10,634	8,660	11,371	9,228	8,167	7,626	5,011	6,410
Other expenses	3,562	1,143	2,265	1,828	1,600	1,227	2,111	1,201	28,726	5,145
Total operating expenses	58,771	60,133	57,970	59,664	59,593	53,733	51,797	47,262	82,134	55,726
Gross Profit	15,460	15,434	7,950	12,054	11,541	13,561	9,776	-1,282	29,698	16,056
Rent	1,628	1,304	981	1,317	1,322	1,329	1,329	1,007	1,385	1,748
Taxes	1,096	878	861	1,459	1,794	1,330	1,518	1,014	1,338	886
Insurances	2,807	3,079	2,705	2,594	3,135	2,658	3,816	3,013	4,989	2,609
Rent to Her Majesty's									3,562	
Adjusted gross profit	9,929	10,173	3,403	6,684	5,290	8,244	3,113	-6,316	18,424	10,813
Payments to contributors	10,643	5,611	1,145	1,627	4,524	3,875	4,331	879	5,164	0
Financing of interest on past loans	6,663	3,070	403	6,311	7,054	3,859	9,151	7,336	5,205	1,678
Adjusted profit	-7,377	1,492	1,855	-1,254	-6,288	510	-10,369	-14,531	8,055	9,135
New loans	10,165	1,500	0	1,500	8,500	2,382	9,319	17,573	2,500	0
Net profit	2,788	2,992	1,855	246	2,212	2,892	-1,050	3,042	10,555	9,135
Gye family	2,425	2,780	2,569	3,760	2,235	2,762	1,232	920	9,688	8,736
Net after personal withdrawals	363	212	-714	-3,514	-23	130	-2,282	2,122	867	399

Table 6 (cont.): Financial Ratios

	1861	1862	1863	1864	1865	1866	1867	1868	1869	1870
Opera expenses as % of opera receipts	82%	86%	94%	87%	90%	88%	86%	105%	62%	80%
Rent as % of receipts	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%
Taxes as % of receipts	2%	1%	1%	2%	3%	2%	3%	2%	2%	1%
Insurances as % of receipts	4%	4%	5%	4%	5%	4%	7%	7%	6%	4%
<i>Expenses as % of receipts (subtotal)</i>	<i>90%</i>	<i>94%</i>	<i>102%</i>	<i>95%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>97%</i>	<i>97%</i>	<i>117%</i>	<i>71%</i>	<i>88%</i>
Gye wages as % of receipts	4%	4%	4%	6%	3%	5%	2%	2%	11%	14%
Total expenses as % of receipts	94%	98%	106%	101%	104%	102%	99%	119%	83%	102%
New Loans as % of total income	12%	2%	0%	2%	11%	3%	13%	28%	2%	0%
Financing as % of total expenses	23%	13%	3%	12%	16%	13%	21%	15%	11%	3%
Expense items as % of receipts										
Singers	31%	30%	35%	34%	33%	32%	30%	36%	23%	38%
Band	10%	11%	11%	11%	11%	12%	12%	16%	9%	13%
Conductor	2%	2%	2%	3%	2%	3%	3%	4%	2%	2%
Sundries	20%	25%	26%	25%	24%	24%	25%	30%	21%	33%
Newspapers	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%
Other	17%	16%	18%	13%	18%	15%	14%	17%	6%	10%

Source: Author's analysis of Courts ledgers

allowances to family members, an average of over £2,500 per year, quickly closed the remaining sum.³⁴

These numbers are a revelation for they underscore the predicament Gye faced with the simultaneous challenge of paying 10% of the principal for the Royal Italian Opera building fund and 5% interest each year. If he were to commit to a strict repayment schedule, he would not have as much money to invest in singers and new productions; but without a strong artistic product, he would not attract as large an audience and would not be able to pay creditors anyway. Even if he did expend the money necessary for success, the opera receipts clearly could not reach a level high enough for him to indemnify creditors adequately. A lesser manager would most likely have folded under these near-impossible circumstances. Gye's financial crisis seems less a reflection of his own competence and more a function of the challenging economics of opera management, compounded by the expense of rebuilding the Royal Italian Opera. Saddled with formidable debt, pressure from his creditors and a fearsome annual cost schedule, opera alone could not pay.

As proprietor of an opera house, Gye had the ability to take on other activities to help meet his costs. His overarching goal for this period, therefore, was to maximize the use of his assets and, by extension, maximize his income and his ability to repay creditors.³⁵ Attractive, well-attended opera seasons were the cornerstone of this plan, and his strategies for ensuring their success will be the subject for the next two chapters.

³⁴ It is unclear to what extent Gye depended on this income. He came into money after winning a lottery for £30,000—a great historical irony (Ralph de Rohan, 'The Descent of the Princely & Ducal House of Rohan-Gyé,' ROHA). Clara Gye avers, however, that Gye's personal loss in the fire was at least that amount (Wyndham, 212n). The family seems to have enjoyed a comfortable economic position, although the manager was concerned about his ability to provide for his children's future (GD, 3 December 1857). Gye was entitled to £2,500 per year as manager, as stipulated in his agreement with the contributors, but usually took less than that in direct wages. Cash withdrawals and allowances or salaries to his family raised the total. He may have supplemented income by privately selling one box and five or six stalls during the Italian opera season, but there is very little information about this practice (GD, 4 November 1869).

³⁵ Shrewd cost management was, of course, not far from the manager's concerns. But given that the Victorian audience valued hearing and seeing the most celebrated singers and the lavish spectacles of *grand opéra*, it was not in an impresario's interest to create a low-cost operation. Much more fundamental to his thinking was to spend prudently, but to focus mainly on the generation of revenue.

The aggressive pursuit of new loans was important as well, and comprised 6% of total income (receipts plus new loans) each year. Yet Gye also considered how he could run an opera company and an opera house in new, more profitable ways. One result was the increase in the number of performances from the traditional two subscription nights per week (Tuesday and Saturday) and one extra night (Thursday). At the beginning of May 1861, during his short-lived monopoly, Gye began to present operas on Monday nights as well. In 1864, he started to give performances on Fridays during the height of the season—June and July—and in 1867, he advanced to six nights per week during this peak period. Whereas in the 1850s, before the fire, he presented an average of 65 performances each season, the years 1861–67 witnessed an average of 78, packed into even shorter seasons. Impressively, Gye surmounted the objections of the booksellers in making these changes who, 'contributing on speculation, do not like the value of the commodity in which they deal cheapened by being rendered too common.'³⁶ J. W. Davison, however, hailed each of the unprecedented changes in performance nights as 'a fact which would have surprised our forefathers....But times change, and theatrical fashions with them. Formerly the Italian Opera was a luxury for the few; now it has become almost a necessity for the many.'³⁷ From the manager's perspective, with demand for Italian opera so high, it seemed fruitless to keep the theatre dark when money could be made in it—especially considering that Mapleson's rival company did not usually perform on these 'extra' nights, so they were often free from competition.

This strategy maximized the use of Gye's company, too. Orchestra, chorus and production personnel received monthly or seasonal salaries so presenting more performances each month with no corresponding salary increases made economic sense.³⁸ A greater number of performances per week was not without exploitative

³⁶ *Times*, 5 August 1861. See GD, 3 May 1856 and 11 July 1863, for specific examples of bookseller resistance to this policy.

³⁷ *Times*, 29 July 1867.

³⁸ One exception to this monthly payment structure was Adelina Patti, who was paid per appearance. Michael Costa's annual salary was raised in 1862 from £1,300 to £1,500 to reflect the greater number of performances in the week (21 March 1862, 3 May 1864).

implications for the artists, however. Costa would complain that such a full schedule, on top of a consistent rehearsal regimen, resulted in considerable fatigue for many in the company, particularly the singers. In fact, this fatigue worsened during the season and ultimately created delays and cancellations of new productions. Singers became more aggressive in contract negotiations about limiting their appearances and increasing their terms, a subject for further discussion in chapter 5.

Maximum use of the opera house was important not just during the opera season but throughout the year. Gye's arrangements with the Pyne-Harrison English Opera Company from 1858 to 1864, and the English Opera Association from 1864 to 1866 brought him more than £5,000 each year, while Promenade concert series presented by Alfred Mellon or John Russell brought over £2,000.³⁹ Gye demanded a flat rent for the use of the theatre, or, with an enterprise and manager he trusted, a share of receipts. He offered special concessions to those he knew well since, in these matters, he 'did not like fresh faces.'⁴⁰ The actual amount of payment depended partly upon whether the lessees were prepared to pay for the use of other company assets or serve Gye's business interests in other ways. The English Opera Association, for example, won attractive terms in its first season because it was to pay Gye for the costumes and scenery of *Masaniello* and *Martha*.⁴¹ The practice of letting the theatre for autumn and winter presentations was by no means new in the 1860s; however, the unique financial circumstances of the 1860s made the income from these lettings more critical. When the English Opera Association folded in 1866, Gye began to miss payments to the contributors. Likewise, when Russell had a financially difficult season in 1867, Gye overdrew his account and provoked the concern of his bankers.⁴² The impresario

³⁹ GD, 10 July 1865. The financial ledgers roughly confirm these figures; the failure of the banks to record the nature of receipts only allows seasonal approximations rather than precise calculations.

⁴⁰ GD, 13 February 1867.

⁴¹ GD, 15 October 1864.

⁴² GD, 28 March 1866, 11 October 1867.

therefore spent considerable time negotiating these contracts, advising the managers on operational and artistic issues and monitoring their success.

The rental of the Floral Hall became an important priority as well. Although *The Survey of London* maintains that the construction of this grand edifice was the result of Gye's obstinate commitment to an 'ill-conceived scheme,' the diaries suggest that the Bedford Office adamantly held Gye to the plan despite his concerns about the costs.⁴³ Although the Hall was originally planned as a flower market, the Bedford office recanted approval for this purpose, worried about competition with the market in Covent Garden. This setback did not faze Gye. He was amenable to a multi-purpose building since a single concert there could earn £1,000. A lengthy series of complications stemming from a neighbouring hotel's complaints of noise and the Duke of Bedford office's desire to get the choice property into its own hands prevented Gye from using it frequently for such lucrative ventures until 1870.⁴⁴ Since the annual rentals and the long-term benefit to the theatre proper were too valuable to give up, Gye invested considerable time fighting the Duke of Bedford's representatives. Throughout these tortuous dealings, Gye considered offers from other impresarios for a wide variety of uses, including a café, a massive photographic shop, a skating hall, and non-musical performances like Japanese jugglers and the novelty act Herman the Conjuror.

A third way to maximize revenue was to operate another theatre in tandem with his own. In 1863, for example, he considered pursuing the *privilège* of managing the Paris Théâtre Italien in addition to the Royal Italian Opera, an arrangement not uncommon for a manager on the Italian opera circuit of this period. This would have enabled Gye to secure year-round control of his singers' schedules and to avoid the most frustrating and financially damaging aspect of managing his London seasons: ensuring that his stars signed for the whole season and arrived on time. Year-round control of singers would also enable him to keep salaries at a lower level, for no longer would he be required to

⁴³ *Survey of London*, 35:81; GD, 5 March and 26 April 1858.

⁴⁴ For concern about noise, see 18 December 1860 and 27 February 1861. For the Duke of Bedford's interest in the property, see 5 December 1863 and 17 May 1870.

lure them away from continental engagements with the promise of greater financial reward. Although he declined to pursue that opportunity seriously, he parlayed it the following year into the ever-elusive idea of a local opera monopoly in London, but nothing came of his discussions with the proprietor of Her Majesty's Theatre.⁴⁵

At the same time, because of his precarious financial position, Gye also began to consider divesting himself of the opera concern altogether. The Companies Act of 1862 most certainly influenced this strategic shift, as it eased the formation of limited liability companies and fostered massive injections of capital into fledgling enterprises. In the theatrical world, this new organization principle would not only promote the proliferation of music hall construction in London in the ensuing decades, but it would have profound implications for the trajectory of opera institutions, as we shall see in chapters 5 and 6.⁴⁶ Gye began to consider selling his interest in the Royal Italian Opera to a newly created company, a prospect which blended with the idea of monopoly in the mid-1860s:

Called on Willert Beale....His plan was for some friends of his to form a limited company & buy me out of the R.I.O. speculation, I remaining manager - I told him of my own scheme which I had for some time contemplated viz: to buy Mapleson's interest in Her Majesty's Theatre & possibly to take the Paris Italian Opera - To let Her Majesty's for any purpose not Italian Opera & eventually to get an Hotel built there - Also to build a large concert room where the Floral Hall now stands - He thought this a much better plan & I told him I thought he & his friends would be better persons than myself to carry it out....I said I would take £270,000 for the lease of the Opera & Floral Hall, new building in Hart St., stock of dresses &c & goodwill & that of this sum I would take £25,000 in shares....I should not object to remain manager for 2 or 3 years but did not care about it - He seemed much pleased with the scheme & said he would see Mapleson today as to buying him out.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ GD, 9 February to 11 March 1863. For more on the Paris combination, see Dideriksen and Ringel, 8.

⁴⁶ Ehrlich, 57; Loftus Fitz-wygram, *Reduction of Capital of Companies and the Subdivision of Shares*, (London: Effingham Wilson, 1867).

⁴⁷ GD, 4 July 1865.

The negotiations for this company occupied Gye daily. A prospectus was prepared but just as it was to be issued, a lawsuit scuppered his plans. Brownlow Knox revived an appeal to a previous decision in the court of Chancery, suing for half the profits Gye made from 1850 to 1856 on the premise that he was Gye's partner.⁴⁸ The company directors, fearing that a loss in the case would deter potential investors, delayed the publication of the prospectus. In fact, the Knox case ultimately derailed Gye's attempt to sell his company to a monopoly concern; Dudley had set a deadline of 1 January 1866 for settling the sale of Her Majesty's Theatre but the Knox appeal continued past that time. It was resolved a month later in Gye's favour, but the money market was in such a bad state that the launch of a new company was out of the question. Once the lending rates settled later that year, Gye once again endeavoured to form a company to combine the two theatres.⁴⁹

Opera had clearly become a more complicated and arduous business during the late 1850s and early 1860s—certainly an increasingly cumbersome set of responsibilities for one manager. The schemes to create a more profitable institutional structure and to sublet the theatre and Floral Hall for ancillary attractions along with the Knox case and the attention given to the contributors distracted Gye's focus from the day-to-day demands of running an opera company. The virtually unchanging nature of the Royal Italian Opera's programming structure, demonstrated in table 5, was in part a result of Gye's inability to dedicate sufficient time to the management of the company, let alone the development of its repertoire. These financial and strategic pressures took a physical

⁴⁸ Knox launched his first bill against Gye in 1861 to determine whether his involvement with the Royal Italian Opera constituted a partnership, in which case he was entitled to a half share of the profits. In 1864 the Court of Chancery decided in Gye's favour. Knox filed a second lawsuit against Gye in 1865, claiming that his investment in the Royal Italian Opera of £5,000 ought to be paid to him from the profits of the theatre—a payment he had declined at the time of his association with Gye. After interim decisions and further appeals, this second suit was finally resolved in 1872 with a judgement by the House of Lords again in Gye's favour (*Knox v. Gye*, C16/31/K27, 29 April and 14 September 1861; C57/M55, 8 July 1872, PRO).

⁴⁹ In January 1866, the Bank of England's discount rate was 8% and in May it rose to 9% (*Times*, 5 January and 12 May 1866). Rates fell in the autumn of 1866 but investor confidence was not restored until the spring of 1868. For influence of the bank rate on Gye's intentions to form a company see GD, 7 February 1866 and 20 March 1867.

toll on the aging impresario; during complications in forming the opera company of 1865, for example, he wrote, 'I was very unwell from the great anxiety and fatigue and had not returned to RIO at night.'⁵⁰ Moreover, these negotiations kept him rooted to London and scuttled the trips to the Continent which were vital to his ability to make arrangements for the opera season. Gye did not depend heavily on the services of outside agents, so without adequate time in Paris, Berlin, Vienna and Italy, he would not hear new works and singers. The combination of the Knox case and the limited company venture in 1865 put a complete stop to his long-standing practice of travelling to the Continent in the autumn for these purposes, effectively cutting his scouting activity in half. The simultaneous demands to manage the theatre finances and to develop additional sources of income denied Gye the time to attend to programming concerns as he had in earlier years and encouraged adherence to successful but dated operas.

James Henry Mapleson and the Search for Security

As with Gye, the fundamental challenge for James Henry Mapleson throughout the 1860s was to secure an adequate venue for his company's activities. Whereas Gye needed to identify ways to make enough money to pay for the facility which he built to his own specifications and owned, Mapleson had to determine how to make money in theatres he did not control. That challenge involved coping with London venues encumbered by a stage size, property box policy and seating capacity unsuited to the scale and variety of performance the public had come to expect. It also meant subjecting himself to the seasonal planning of a theatre proprietor and to the unfavourable arrangement of investing in scenery and machinery which became the property of his landlord. In running an opera company and not an opera house, Mapleson's short-term challenge was to obtain the most use from his artists to achieve maximum income. His longer-term and

⁵⁰ GD, 25 July 1865.

underlying concern was to command his own theatre, or at least to rent one more favourable to his artistic and monetary interests.

Surprising as it may seem, it is possible that Mapleson formed his own opera company after the default of E. T. Smith only at the behest of Gye's supporter, John Mitchell. As a bookseller, Mitchell had a vested interest in two opera concerns and therefore lent Mapleson £4,000 to establish himself in opposition to Gye.⁵¹ For the 1861 season, Mapleson secured the Lyceum but, as indicated before, that venue had only limited accommodation and was insufficient for staging *grand opéra*.⁵² When Gye had presented seasons there in 1856 and 1857, he staged only two *grands opéras*, *La favorite* and *Maria di Rohan*. Mapleson faced similar constraints. Additionally, as a start-up venture, Mapleson's company did not have sufficient resources for those works: an orchestra of 45 players, a small chorus, a company of only twelve principal singers with Tietjens and Giuglini appearing in each performance, and shabby *mise-en-scène*. *The Times* criticized the venture on musical grounds but praised its spirit.⁵³

During the winter of 1861-62, Mapleson attempted to lease Her Majesty's Theatre, a venue with larger seating capacity necessary to 'get straight' from losses of £1,800 in the brief Lyceum season.⁵⁴ His attempt was complicated as Dudley entertained proposals from more financially liquid impresarios such as Prosper Bagier and Gye himself, looking to shut Mapleson out. As late as February, Mapleson had still not secured the theatre for the approaching season and Gye negotiated (unsuccessfully) to engage Mapleson's star

⁵¹ This is, at least, what Mapleson told Gye seven years later (GD, 17 July 1868).

⁵² The status of the Lyceum as an alternative or interim venue for opera companies has been reconsidered in the last two years in the redevelopment plans of the Royal Opera House and the English National Opera. Even after its current refurbishment, the Lyceum can only serve as a temporary home for opera, its long-term use only viable as a dance house or commercial West End theatre (Art's Council Stevenson Report; John Harrison, Royal Opera House Technical Director, interview with author, 12 January 1995).

⁵³ *Times*, 8 July 1861.

⁵⁴ *MM*, 35. He also wrote that he vowed 'as the Monte Carlo gambler constantly does, that as soon as I got quite straight I would stop, and never play again. I have been endeavouring during the last thirty years to get straight, and still hope to do so.' Mapleson could move to Her Majesty's Theatre in 1862 because E. T. Smith's agreement with Gye closed it to opera for 1861 only.

singers, Tietjens and Giuglini.⁵⁵ As of 11 March, not a month before the season start, Mapleson was still trying to put together the financial backing to meet Dudley's £4,000 security deposit and £4,000 rental fee, payable in advance.⁵⁶ The booksellers once again came to his aid, as did individual supporters—possibly including a loan of £2,000 from Tietjens herself—and Mapleson announced four days later with characteristic flourish that he would take a 21-year lease of Her Majesty's. He confessed in the *Memoirs* that he began the season with hardly any money and rumours alleged that Mapleson's venture was in terrible financial trouble.⁵⁷

Her Majesty's Theatre was a more attractive venue than the Lyceum, but not well-suited to the changing nature of the audience and repertoire for Italian opera. When Mapleson took residence in 1862, the stage retained the dimensions of Michael Novosielski's theatre of 1791 and the auditorium followed the reconstruction of 1818. Accounts vary widely as to the arrangement of boxes and stalls, but one can attempt to compare its capacity to Gye's theatre.⁵⁸ Theoretically, Her Majesty's could accommodate more patrons than the Royal Italian Opera (2,500 v. 1,900) but its abundance of boxes made the theatre more difficult to fill. Her Majesty's had 237 boxes in six tiers, compared to Covent Garden Theatre's 120 in four tiers, and its gallery only held a little more than 500 as opposed to 984.⁵⁹ At the Royal Italian Opera, most boxes were

⁵⁵ GD, 24 January and 28 February 1862. In the *Memoirs*, Mapleson changes this chronology, saying that he had already secured the venue when Gye tried to engage Tietjens (36).

⁵⁶ *MM*, 35. Beale confirms London theatre rents were between £4,000 and £6,500 (*Impresario*, 35).

⁵⁷ Though Mapleson again said he was supported by Mitchell, Gye confronted Mitchell on 11 March who said 'he should not advance a shilling.' Hermione Rudersdorff, a member of Gye's company and a perennial source of information about the rival theatre, told Gye that Tietjens contributed £2,000 in exchange for a share of receipts (9 April 62; see also 24 June 1861). Gye heard about Mapleson's financial difficulties on 8 and 12 May.

⁵⁸ The Theatre Museum has excellent materials on the layout of Her Majesty's Theatre under Lumley's management in the 1840s. *The Survey of London* and PRO are strong for the reconstructed theatre of 1869. No resource adequately describes the theatre under Mapleson's early management. One must work with a variety of disparate sources including Lumley's plans, *The Mapleson Memoirs* and articles in *The Times*. The best source for details concerning the reconstructed Royal Italian Opera is an article in *The Builder*, 22 May 1858.

⁵⁹ Theatre plans, Her Majesty's Theatre Buildings File, Theatre Museum, London; *Survey of London*, 29:243 and 35:98, 103-104. For winter presentations, when box divisions were removed, Her

slightly more expensive than comparable ones at Her Majesty's, while amphitheatre seats and orchestra stalls were priced the same.⁶⁰ Analysis suggests that a sold out performance at the Royal Italian Opera at full prices would be £1,350 and one at Her Majesty's about £1,250.⁶¹ However, property box agreements hurt Mapleson more severely. Gye never assigned more than a total of eight boxes and twenty-two stalls; he made these concessions to facilitate the financing of the theatre and they brought his potential income down by about £90 per night.⁶² At Her Majesty's, long-standing property box arrangements dating from Richard Brinsley Sheridan's financing of the theatre in the late-eighteenth century meant that approximately 49 boxes and 45 stalls belonged to individuals, and these agreements remained in force through Mapleson's management. This most likely represented a loss to Mapleson of over £225 per night.⁶³ Furthermore, Her Majesty's Theatre would have been more difficult to fill generally, because unsubscribed boxes were hard to sell once the season had begun.⁶⁴

Majesty's could hold an extra 900 and Covent Garden an additional 600 people. Another 200 people could be crammed into the Covent Garden galleries for extraordinary occasions (*Builder*, 22 May 1858).

⁶⁰ In 1863, for example, subscription prices for 40 nights were as follows:

Location	Royal Italian Opera	Her Majesty's Theatre
Pit tier box	220 gns.	200 gns.
Grand tier box	240 gns.	260 gns.
First tier box	200 gns.	190 gns.
Second tier box	100 gns.	120 gns.
Orchestra stall	35 gns.	32 gns.
Amphi stall (nightly)	10s 6d, 7s and 5s	7s and 5s
Gallery (nightly)	2s 6d	2s 6d

Mapleson also offered a subscription plan for 30 nights of the season (*Times*, daily advertisements, 1863).

⁶¹ These figures exclude the considerable discounts resulting from sales of boxes and stalls to booksellers. The diaries confirm this capacity calculation. Gye told Émile Perrin 'my receipts which varied so immensely with different operas going from £70 or £80 to 7 8 and £900 with the subscription sometimes to £1200 or £1300' (GD, 6 February 1865).

⁶² GD, 13 May 1873.

⁶³ A theatre plan dating from between 1844–48 marks what appear to be the property boxes which Lumley assigned (Her Majesty's Theatre Buildings File, Theatre Museum). See also GD, 17 November 1851.

⁶⁴ See, for example, Royal Italian Opera box-office reports, ROHA and Northcott Collection.

Before assuming residence in the 1862 season, Mapleson embarked on the first of what became many efforts to improve the capacity, decor and stage size of the aging Her Majesty's Theatre. In 1862, he added three rows of stalls, 117 seats in all. The following season, he cleaned and restored the theatre and, before the 1865 season, renovated the theatre further by altering the boxes, enhancing the chandeliers and enlarging the stage dimensions.⁶⁵ The stage measured 60' from the orchestra to the back wall (but only 35' from the proscenium arch to the back wall), 80' between the side walls and 40' wide at the proscenium. The Royal Italian Opera, by contrast, constructed with a view to accommodate *grand opéra*, was 85' deep, 85' wide wall to wall and 49' at the proscenium.⁶⁶ Mapleson's stage enlargements in 1865 still did not allow him to present stage spectacles on a lavish scale.⁶⁷ Indeed, Mapleson could only accommodate large productions after he removed the proscenium boxes the following year, which increased the stage depth by 16'.⁶⁸ While the improvements to both theatre and stage enhanced the artistic capability and earning potential of Mapleson's company, they could delay the opening of the season by a month (as in 1862 and 1865). They also cost considerable sums. Unlike Gye's expenditures, which increased the value of his own property, Mapleson's benefited his landlord, the Earl of Dudley.

Additionally, Mapleson's investment in the productions themselves—including scenery, costumes and music—increased the value of Her Majesty's Theatre, not Mapleson's troupe.⁶⁹ As the manager of an opera company, not a theatre, Mapleson's

⁶⁵ *MM*, 36. Standard cleaning would have been required in Mapleson's lease agreement; all theatres required frequent refurbishment because of discharges from the gas lighting.

⁶⁶ *Survey of London*, 29:239, 35:105. See page 78 above to compare the stage dimensions of the previous Covent Garden Theatre. The Royal Italian Opera had smaller scene recesses than Her Majesty's at the sides of the stage, but Gye commissioned a scene store in Hart (now Floral) Street in 1860.

⁶⁷ After this improvement, in 1866, Davison wrote, 'With a stage of such comparatively limited dimensions it is really surprising what has been accomplished' (*Times*, 28 May 1866).

⁶⁸ *MM*, 60; *Times*, 7 November 1866. The *Memoirs* incorrectly list 1865 as the date of the removal of proscenium boxes.

⁶⁹ *GD*, 26 July 1865.

only assets were his engagements and the amount of time remaining on his lease of Her Majesty's. A more severe implication of Mapleson's position was that the Earl of Dudley could threaten to sell the theatre from underneath him or to close it to opera altogether. Believing that two theatres for opera could not make money and lacking interest in the theatre business after ten years, Dudley attempted to do so continually through Mapleson's tenancy.⁷⁰ In 1862, 1863 and 1865, he discussed selling the theatre to Gye, to a company or to the government in order to establish a post office, hotel or dramatic playhouse. In 1865, by which time Mapleson was well-established at the theatre, the impresario was consulted regarding this sale, but Dudley continued to operate in his own and not Mapleson's interests. The impresario clearly suffered economic and operational disadvantages as lessee of Her Majesty's.

The Mapleson Memoirs would have one believe that the plucky impresario enjoyed one brilliant season after another. According to Gye's informants, many of them associated with Her Majesty's Opera, Mapleson approached insolvency annually and escaped it at the last moment. In January 1863, it was reported that Mapleson would not be able to open for the coming season. Later that year, the impresario Bernard Ullman reported to Gye that 'the speculators in Her Majesty's were this season Tietjens who had put in £3,000-- Mapleson £3,000-- Col B Knox (!) £3,000-- & Major Blake £3,000!'⁷¹ Knox and Blake were, of course, Gye's enemies. Tietjens valued keeping the company afloat since she reigned as *prima donna assoluta* and may have been intimate with Mapleson. Despite this initial support, it was reported to Gye later in the 1863 season that Mapleson had financial problems:

Mad. [Hermione] Rudersdorff [one of Gye's sopranos] came and asked me if I was inclined to buy Mapleson out of Her Majesty's Theatre - she evidently came from Tietjens and so I suppose things are getting bad there - I told her T would stay until the house tumbled to pieces - she was now very little attraction - R. said 'she wondered if any position could be made

⁷⁰ See Lumley, *Earl of Dudley*.

⁷¹ GD, 10 July 1863. The exclamation is Gye's.

for Mapleson' -- fishing to see if I would employ him - I said he could hold up Tietjens' dress and see her bed warmed at night - R. acknowledged they were intimate, M & T - I said I should of course listen to any proposal made for the theatre or Tietjens.⁷²

Even though the 1863 season was the first in which Mapleson met with undisputed artistic success, introducing *Faust* to England and staging a revival of *Oberon*, the fact that Mitchell lost money on his season suggests that the year had been bad for Mapleson as it had been for Gye.

As Gye's company rebounded in 1864, so did Mapleson's and Her Majesty's began to recover some of its old prestige. Nevertheless, the belief persisted that Mapleson would not be able to sustain his venture financially. Gye suspected, for example, that 'the best plan [to take over Her Majesty's] would be to let Mapleson fail as he most likely would,' and Dudley himself 'said he knew Mapleson could not hope to carry on the theatre & he should like to see Covent Garden the only house as he did not think two operas could exist.'⁷³ Indeed, despite Mapleson's good season in 1864, Chappell told Gye at the beginning of 1865 that Mapleson was 'on his last legs.'⁷⁴ Like many other industry professionals with links to both theatres, he may have been merely telling Gye what the impresario wanted to hear. But supporting this state of affairs, Mapleson undertook substantial alterations to the theatre later that spring— for which he could not pay. Mitchell confessed that he had assumed most of the expense, defrayed in part by contributions from the property box holders, and that Mapleson 'had not got a guinea.'⁷⁵ Furthermore, Mapleson announced midway through the season that he would accept requests for opera subscriptions for the following season, a cavalier sales technique that betrayed his immediate need for cash. Three days later, as Gye continued to develop plans for a company to combine his theatre with Dudley's, the proprietor of Her Majesty's

⁷² GD, 15 May 1863.

⁷³ GD, 7 March and 18 May 1864.

⁷⁴ GD, 12 January 1865.

⁷⁵ GD, 15 May 1865.

revealed 'he had now an "insolvent tenant" (Mapleson) & did not know in how short a time he might be without one at all!'⁷⁶

Mapleson's financial difficulties showed no signs of lifting in 1866 and approached crisis once again in 1867.⁷⁷ Through the first half of 1867, Mapleson circulated the idea that he was constructing a new opera house in the middle of Leicester Square.⁷⁸ However, it was simultaneously reported that he was in great difficulty and might not be able to open his season. In fact, his prospectus for the season did not come out until several weeks after Gye's and his season started a month later than usual, at the end of April. One week into Mapleson's season, Mario reported to Gye that the impresario 'was in a bad way' and had to borrow money to pay the band and chorus. Two weeks later, Mitchell revealed to Gye that 'he had helped Mapleson largely to pay his rent to Lord Dudley & had again lent him more money on Saturday last to pay the people - he now thought that Mapleson would get through his season but did not think Her Majesty's Theatre would go on after that.'⁷⁹ The arrival of Christine Nilsson in June 1867 briefly reversed Mapleson's fortunes for the last two months of the season.⁸⁰ His short streak of good news, however, came to an abrupt halt on 6 December when a fire completely consumed the theatre.

Mapleson's Management Strategies

Whereas Gye addressed his financial difficulties with adept management, several sources support the claim that Mapleson's fiscal management was lax. During the coalition years, for example, Mapleson's secretary told Gye 'Mapleson's accounts for the late tournée [to

⁷⁶ GD, 6 July 1865.

⁷⁷ GD, 20 April and 1 June 1866.

⁷⁸ GD, 11 February and 24 June 1867.

⁷⁹ GD, 21 May 1867.

⁸⁰ GD, 25 May and 4 June 1867.

the provinces] were so badly made out & so confused that it was impossible to make them out.⁸¹ Gye did not need to be told of his rival cum co-manager's financial ineptitude; during their seasons as joint managers Mapleson overdrew their joint bank account several times, something Gye never did during the partnership. Mapleson also drew from the account more heavily and more frequently than did Gye, to the latter's dismay.⁸² Newly discovered correspondence between Mapleson and his bank from a later period (1875-81) confirms and clarifies further Mapleson's reputation for deplorable financial management. Scores of letters show that Mapleson would consistently borrow money (or overdraw his account) and assign as security all the expected income of a pending event:

In consideration of your having paid various sums by which my special account has become overdrawn I undertake to hand to you the whole net proceeds of my operatic & concert tours from the termination of the present tour until the regular Opera season commences & I will instruct my treasurer regularly to remit to you the amounts.⁸³

No anticipated sum was too big or too small for Mapleson to consign. He ceded everything from an entire tour's receipts to a single supporter's subscription payment. It is unclear that this practice dated from as early as the 1860s but so long as it did, Mapleson was not in control of his company as much as he was hostage to his bank.

Specific financial information for Mapleson is limited, but a budget for his 1879 season at Her Majesty's Theatre introduces one explanation for his recurrent problems (table 7). A comparison of these figures with some of Gye's illustrates general

⁸¹ GD, 27 November 1869. The following discussion substantiates for the first time Mapleson's severe incompetence as a businessman; his *Memoirs*, Rosenthal's *Two Centuries* and Cone's *First Rival* perpetuate his image as sensationalist and extravagant, but provide no basis for an objective assessment of his abilities.

⁸² GD, 16 December 1869.

⁸³ Mapleson letter to Ransom & Bouverie, 19 February 1878, Barclay's Records Services. This collection comprises two large folders of documents, including correspondence between Mapleson and his bank, insurance policies, bookseller box contracts, and lists of subscribers. These documents paint a dismal picture of Mapleson's operations in the late 1870s. Ransom & Bouverie was one of the initial member banks merged into Barclay's. Mapleson's financial accounts do not survive in this collection.

Table 7: Comparison of Mapleson budget and Gye financials

Mapleson Budget: 9 May 1879					
	Income	As % of receipts		Expenses	As % of receipts
Trade Subscription	£10,281	26%	Weekly Bills		
			12 Weeks at say £600	£7,200	18%
Private Subscription	2,496	6%	Artistes say	14,000	35%
Refreshment Contract	180	0%	Sir M Costa	1,000	3%
Refreshment Deposit	400	1%	Orchestra	4,000	10%
Opera Glasses	24	0%	Military Band	400	1%
Books (say)	250	1%	Gas	320	1%
Concerts private (say)	4,000	10%	Advertising	1,000	3%
Morning Performances			Printing say		
(10 at 550 ea)	5,500	14%		300	1%
Box Office & Door Receipts			Tradesmens Bills say	500	1%
60 Performances at say £230	13,800	35%			
3 Albert Hall Concerts each £500	1,500	4%	Aida	120	0%
Half Sims Reeves Benefit	700	2%	Mignon	120	0%
Albert Hall					
J.H.M. Benefit H.M. Theatre	700	2%			
			Insurance	390	1%
[Total receipts]	£39,831		Ground Rent	483	1%
			Taxes	800	2%
	15,000		Maple (furniture)	700	2%
[Added in pencil] Add Bubb's Subscription	24,831				
			[Total expenses]	£30,634	
Gye Finances, 1878 season					
	Income			As % of receipts	
Total receipts	£67,201		Sundries	£16,278	24%
			Artistes	22,554	34%
			Conductors	1,852	3%
			Orchestra	6,288	9%
			Advertising	1,594	2%
			Insurance	2,880	4%
			Ground Rent	1,241	2%
			Taxes	1,225	2%

Source: Mapleson budget, Barclay's Records Services; Gye finances, Coutts ledger, 1878.

differences between the two enterprises and provides some indication of Mapleson's approach to planning an opera season. The 1878 Royal Italian Opera season, Frederick Gye's last and a very profitable one, is used as a foil merely because it is closest in date.⁸⁴ Because the institutions and season lengths differed, it is useful for comparative purposes to view individual line items (e.g., 'artists') in relative terms, as percentages of total receipts, and not in absolute terms. This perspective answers two questions: within their respective institutions, how did the managers generate income (or, in Mapleson's case, expect to generate it) and how did they allocate it (or expect to allocate it)?⁸⁵ The comparison suggests that Gye and Mapleson expended money for an opera season in a similar way. Each expected a little over one third of income to pay for singers, approximately 10% for the orchestra, and 3% for the conductor. When one adds to Mapleson's category of 'weekly bills' the miscellaneous items (printing, tradesmen bills, furniture) which Gye would have included in his 'sundries' category, these costs are also comparable, just under one quarter of gross revenues. Advertising expenses were roughly on par with each other.⁸⁶ These similarities constitute a significant discovery: Mapleson may not have been an utter profligate, as commonly believed. He seemed to understand opera expenditures as Gye did, suggesting that opera impresarios may have shared basic formulae for the financial planning of their seasons. On the basis of expenditures alone, there is no apparent reason why Mapleson would have suffered greater financial turmoil than Gye.

The 1879 budget suggests further that Mapleson may have been unrealistic about the income he could expect. His sources of income were varied. Subscriptions, box office

⁸⁴ Coutts ledgers, 1878. The focus of opera institutions had changed from the early 1860s so a contemporary basis of comparison is more equitable.

⁸⁵ There are fundamental problems inherent to the comparison of one company to another and of one budget to actual financials. The exercise, however, is meant to assess relative costs and revenue, not actual figures. I also make the generous assumption that we can learn something about Mapleson's financial management in the 1860s from figures taken from a significantly later period. Given the scarce availability of financial material, there is little other choice. Certainly, he was said to have had financial difficulties in both periods, although perhaps not for the same reasons.

⁸⁶ Gye's insurance and ground rent figures are not comparable to Mapleson's because of the different management structures of their companies.

and an assortment of ancillary activities each comprised a third of his anticipated revenues for the season. At Gye's company, the only available division of income comes from the 1869 coalition season: trade subscriptions comprised 36% of total revenues for the opera season, private subscriptions 15%, box office 36% and concerts 13%. Diary accounts and other box-office reports support the notion that, in other seasons, Gye arranged over half of his income before the season began, a substantially greater proportion than Mapleson.⁸⁷ Perhaps Gye had better relationships with the trade and they trusted his prospectus promises more. Whatever the reason for this discrepancy, Mapleson had to patch together a more considerable component of his income from a variety of activities as the season progressed—a riskier proposition based upon the fulfillment of several circumstances. The calculations Mapleson scribbled in pencil below this income statement cast further doubt upon his fiscal judgement. He noted, 'Add Bubb's subscription' but he subtracted £15,000 from his total. The reason for this emendation is unclear; could Mapleson have owed Bubb, a bookseller, this amount of money? If so, did Mapleson prepare this budget with the knowledge that he would see £15,000 less than he marked down? Factoring in this change, Mapleson's net profit, budgeted at £9,197, becomes a loss of £5,803. The evidence is circumstantial, but this document suggests that Mapleson might have possessed a good sense of the costs needed to run an opera season but may have held over-optimistic expectations for his income.

Given the state of affairs suggested by other observers and confirmed in Mapleson's correspondence and budget, how did he stay in the opera business for so long? For one thing, the Ransom & Bouverie correspondence reveals that he regularly threatened bankruptcy as a means to ensure continued support.' In August 1877, he wrote to them,

I find myself in a great difficulty it being quite impossible to get a bill done anywhere for even so small an amount....At the present moment I am pressed, and Bankruptcy proceedings about to be taken in various

⁸⁷ Chapter 1, page 38; Box-office reports, ROHA and Northcott Collection.

quarters which an amount of 800, or at most £1,000 will avert and place things on a secure footing at all events until the spring of next year.⁸⁸

The implication of his language and tactics was that if the bank did not support him more, its outstanding debt or its security would be in jeopardy. This example is representative of what appears to have been a more fundamental proclivity. One detects in Gye's diaries many situations in which Mapleson delayed negotiations or withheld information for so long that others were forced to act in ways or settle for terms which ultimately worked to his favour.⁸⁹

Mapleson's ability to secure credit from individuals seems to have derived less from the intrinsic merit of his opera venture and more from the desire of some individuals' fear of monopoly or desire to see some alternative to Gye's company. Booksellers, newspapers, Gye's enemies and star singers envious of Patti's success came to his aid. Certainly, Mapleson had a flair for currying favour with wealthy patrons; after the destruction of Her Majesty's Theatre, for example, he personally solicited generous contributions from numerous members of the aristocracy. Through his willingness to contribute singers and other company resources to benefit concerts, he ingratiated himself with a number of 'illustrious,' mostly female patrons.⁹⁰ When loans, and not outright contributions came his way, one of Mapleson's strengths—and certainly that which enabled him to operate with such precarious finances for so long—emerged: a deft ability to put off creditors. Arditi's statement in chapter 1 provided one example of Mapleson's slick manner and Strakosch's memoirs further support this image: 'il avait au supreme degré l'art de renvoyer un créancier trop pressant, les paroles aimables tenant

⁸⁸ Mapleson letter to Ransom & Bouverie, 14 August 1877, Barclay's Records Services.

⁸⁹ See, for example, the Her Majesty's Theatre and Chancery Bill episodes in GD, July and August 1869, June and July 1870; these will be touched upon in chapter 6.

⁹⁰ See *Times*, 13 May 1867. Mapleson's charm may account for his ability to attract financial support. There are, in fact, examples of women approaching him unsolicited. An undated *carte de visite* from Lady Westmoreland in Mapleson's scrapbook located in the Mapleson Music Library, reads 'Dear Col. Mapleson, If my name can be of any use, please use it.' Written on top in Mapleson's hand is 'yes.'

lieu d'argent...il ne refusait jamais rien, mais quand sa caisse était vide, ce qui arrivait souvent, il savait se débarrasser d'une requête sans laisser soupçonner sa situation financière.⁹¹

Apart from this manipulation of creditors, Mapleson stayed solvent by supplementing opera season income with a number of activities. Whereas Gye strove to bolster his income after the opera season by putting his theatre to maximum use, Mapleson appeared to have great difficulty subletting his theatre for other entertainments. Typically, he filled it in the autumn with opera performances given by his own company, but he never had a regular renter for the winter. One year, William Harrison presented an English opera and pantomime, another year Mapleson's conductor Luigi Arditi led a concert series and another Edmond Falconer presented drama. It is possible that Mapleson was so occupied with arranging tours for the winter that he had little time to solicit entertainments for Her Majesty's. Indeed, Mapleson met with great financial success by maximizing the use of his troupe of singers throughout the year. Unlike Gye, he engaged a few of his star singers through the autumn and winter months to present 'tournées' of popular operas and concerts through England, Scotland and Ireland. These were massive undertakings; in 1866, he deployed two parties of singers to perform 120 concerts in 70 towns in 60 days, and then combined them for opera performances in Scotland.⁹² More than anything else, it was these tours which helped keep Mapleson's company solvent. They apparently made a profit of £400 per week and Mapleson would later tell Gye that 'he had annually cleared a profit in the provinces of £6 or £7,000 a year but had always lost it in London.'⁹³

⁹¹ 'He had the highest mastery of the art of paying back his impatient creditors with smooth talk instead of money...he never refused anything, but when his coffers were empty, which happened often, he knew how to get rid of a request without letting his financial situation be known' (Strakosch, 38-39).

⁹² *MM*, 61.

⁹³ GD, 8 June 1870. This was Gye's way of indicating '£6,000 or £7,000.' The letter from Mapleson to Ransom & Bouverie cited in note 91 reveals further that the concert spring tour 'is always certain of say £400 a week profit'. Contemporary observers confirm that Mapleson made his money from these provincial tours (e.g., Grüneisen, 42).

As Mapleson's 1879 budget suggests, the impresario also released his singers to concert presenters during the opera season in London on a weekly basis. Figures provided by Gye in his diaries show that there were various methods of structuring these arrangements: the impresario could take from the concert presenter a percentage of receipts, a flat fee for a package of multiple concerts with several singers (from which the impresario would pay the singers directly), or the singer's wage plus a fee to the impresario to allow the transaction. Given the wide scope of concert activity in London, the particular popularity of oratorio and concert arias, and the large size of concert audiences, there was tremendous opportunity for profit. Concert fees were considerable; a deal of four singers for eight concerts at Crystal Palace could bring £2,000 to the impresario.⁹⁴ While the singers enjoyed the prospect of earning additional sums from concerts on nights they did not perform, there was some risk to the impresario that overexposing the singer could compromise opera receipts and could tire the singer. Gye therefore was careful to limit singers' appearances. Mapleson, by contrast, allowed them to perform outside the theatre somewhat indiscriminately, a practice which seems to have helped him make money. These issues will be explored at greater length in chapter 5.

In addition to sublets of the theatre, tours and concerts, Mapleson took various steps to expand the audience base for Italian opera. One group he sought was the out-of-town audience, newly enabled to attend evening performances because of improvements to railway and omnibus service in the late 1850s and the opening of the first Underground line in 1863.⁹⁵ In his first three seasons, the opera began half an hour earlier than the traditional time of 8:30 so that this audience could catch the last train home at midnight.⁹⁶ Regularly scheduled 'morning performances' (Wednesday matinees) were geared towards this audience. He also introduced postal sales for *Faust* in 1863 and the

⁹⁴ GD, 30 March 1867.

⁹⁵ L. C. B. Seaman, *Life in Victorian London* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1973), 51-77.

⁹⁶ He changed the time to 8:30 in 1864 to accommodate subscribers, who preferred a later start, but on cheap nights he retained the earlier time for the middle class audience. See also *Times*, 4 April 1871.

sale of reserved seats at the door in 1866, to help those who could not purchase from a bookseller or the box office during the day.⁹⁷ These changes to accommodate the out-of-town audience paralleled similar gestures undertaken by concert presenters. In the mid-1860s, for example, the Chappells started to repeat the programmes of their Monday Popular Concerts on Saturdays to serve this audience.⁹⁸

Most important, in 1862 Mapleson began to extend his Italian seasons at cheap prices, with an earlier starting time and 'without restriction of evening costume,' all designed to attract 'the general public' to the theatre. Previous reduced price ventures had presented scaled-down performances, but Mapleson promised not to compromise the quality of casts or productions and, indeed, to present 'a few favourite operas...with (if possible) additional attractions and further completeness.' Mapleson claimed that the decision to begin this policy stemmed from his 'hopes to obtain the patronage and support of the general public' and to attract the 'numerous foreign and country visitors at present in London.'⁹⁹ The former explanation is consistent with the manager's populist bent but the latter is more plausible; Mapleson's policy was surely a reaction to capitalize upon the large number of tourists remaining in London that year for the International Exhibition. Indeed, Mapleson's cheap night scheme brought substantial financial benefits. Since the theatre was still engaged to him and he could not deliver a fashionable audience at that time of year, filling it with foreigners, provincial visitors and out-of-town residents was surely better than not filling it at all. In fact, the maximum potential revenue of the house may not have been significantly reduced. Prices ranged from two shillings for the gallery to three guineas for a grand tier box, as opposed to the regular prices of two and a half shillings to five guineas. Mapleson crammed more seats into the theatre for these performances and the special nature of these events may have enabled him to suspend property box and stall arrangements. If he sold many more seats at cheap prices than he

⁹⁷ *Times*, 19 June 1863 and 10 August 1866.

⁹⁸ *Times*, 13 February 1867.

⁹⁹ *Times*, 26 July 1862.

did at regular prices, Mapleson may have made close to the same or more money on these nights. Mapleson profited further by paring down his roster of leading singers to a minimum number for this period and scheduling them for each performance. He may have promised not to compromise on artistic quality, but he certainly did not keep all his stars engaged. Mapleson's cheap night policy was initially viewed as undignified, though its popularity and ability to generate new audiences was generally acknowledged.¹⁰⁰

The success of the enterprise was such that Mapleson introduced a brief two-week season of Italian opera in London in the autumn of 1862, with the same works and casts as his autumn tournée but at reduced prices. Again, the practice was seen as cavalier but its success induced Mapleson to repeat this schedule each year. From 1862-67, a total of 24% of all performances during the summer Italian opera season, and 38% of all Mapleson's London performances (including autumn seasons) were given at reduced prices. He attempted to lower prices for the entire 1864 season, but the experiment must have failed, for he raised them to their previous levels the following year.¹⁰¹ To maximize the amount of income he could realize from these performances, Mapleson converted the seating structure of the theatre substantially. Before the 1863 season, he replaced a portion of upper tier private boxes with public seats. In 1864 and 1866, he 'greatly enlarged' the pit 'to accommodate the nightly overflow,' by removing orchestra stalls. For the last night of the 1866 season, he removed the upper boxes to 'throw open' the space at low prices.¹⁰² The combination of cheap nights and additional seating became a welcome and popular seasonal feature:

Mr Mapleson's 'ante-Christmas' performances of Italian opera...have a success unlooked for, and, indeed, unprecedented at this early period of the season. This cannot be ascribed to any change in the habits of the fashionable classes; for the town, we believe, is not fuller than it usually is in the month of December; but the Italian opera is no longer what it once

¹⁰⁰ *Times*, 26 August and 1 September 1862.

¹⁰¹ Her Majesty's Theatre Prospectuses, *Times*, 12 March 1864 and 27 March 1865.

¹⁰² *Times*, 12 August 1864, 23 July and 10 August 1866.

was—an entertainment exclusively patronised by 'the upper ten thousand.' On the contrary...Italian opera...is becoming more and more frequented by the English public every day. This, we apprehend, is the cause of the success of Mr Mapleson's performances.¹⁰³

While for the most part these evenings attracted 'an entirely different public from that which is looked to for patronage in the regular operatic season,' it was not unknown for members of the upper classes or even royalty to attend.¹⁰⁴ Mapleson's experiments and his changes to the opera-going experience were shrewd. Her Majesty's Theatre, historically the locus of the aristocratic audience in London, had lost that distinction to the Royal Italian Opera with the collapse of Lumley's management in the early 1850s. Mapleson was therefore wise to exploit the spread of opera to new audiences, and contribute further to that movement, as a means to redefine the image of Her Majesty's. These unique innovations exemplify the crafty instincts and unflagging persistence that enabled Mapleson to remain competitive throughout his otherwise beleaguered management.

Influence on repertoire

Returning now to tables 4 and 5, one is able to discern how the managers' operational difficulties during the 1860s was reflected in their programming. Gye coped year to year with a burdensome but consistent financial problem, and the repertoire structure at the Royal Italian Opera changed little through the 1860s. One might posit that Gye's skill in calibrating the various pressures of management enabled him to carry out a consistent programming concept. As indicated before, a more accurate interpretation of events,

¹⁰³ *Illustrated London News*, November 1868 (date illegible).

¹⁰⁴ *Times*, 27 October 1864, 7 November 1866. Mapleson's attempt to have two different policies at different parts of the year created some confusion for theatregoers. In the beginning of the 1863 season, he needed to publish notices regarding the strict enforcement of evening dress (*Times*, 8 April 1863).

supported by the diaries, is that as Gye spent more time on the financial management of the company, he devoted considerably less to the development of the repertoire.

The venue and financial difficulties associated with Mapleson's new venture, by contrast, were more volatile, and revealing patterns emerge in his choice of genres and works. Venue and financial problems militated against the production of *grand opéra*. The stage dimensions of both the Lyceum and Her Majesty's were unsuited to the large-scale *tableaux* of Meyerbeer's works in vogue with the London public. Additionally, Mapleson's scarce financial resources in the initial years of his venture created difficulties to cast the operas' extensive *dramatis personæ* adequately. Of course, with Tietjens as *prima donna*, Mapleson was obliged to give the public a chance to hear her in the most popular works of the day; as Davison noted, 'If Mademoiselle Titiens belonged to an Italian "troop" in a barn, the *Huguenots* would be presented, if only for the sake of so magnificent a Valentine.'¹⁰⁵ Still, the time and cost involved with creating the many spectacular costumes and scenes so critical to the genre of *grand opéra* dissuaded the impresario from staging these operas. For the few that he did create, the ensemble and *mise-en-scène* were much criticized and compared unfavourably to the representations at the Royal Italian Opera, a theatre constructed to accommodate this repertoire. The programming differences between the two houses were marked. Whereas Gye rotated six of Meyerbeer's works and staged *grands opéras* for nearly half of all performances from 1861-67, Mapleson only presented *Les Huguenots* (every season), *Robert le diable* (sporadically) and *Dinorah* (in 1866 only) and only a quarter of his performances came from the French repertoire. The exceptions to Mapleson's meager representation of French opera were the 1863 and 1864 seasons when he introduced Gounod's *Faust* and *Mireille*.

The same factors that inhibited the staging of French opera encouraged the production of Italian *opere serie* and *buffe*. In the years during which Mapleson faced particular financial hardship, he retreated into heavy programming of the standard Italian

¹⁰⁵ *Times*, 1 July 1861.

opere serie and *buffe*. This pattern produced the 'spikes' in table 4, in which Italian opera exploded to over 50% of Mapleson's performances. In 1862, his first full opera season, he admitted to financial struggles, and 1865 was one of the years in which Mitchell had to prop up his venture. The pattern continued in subsequent years: 1868 was the first season after the fire at Her Majesty's, forcing him to start anew, and 1871 was his first season after the coalition with Gye. In the years 1875-77, he committed a tremendous amount of money to the construction of the National Opera House and, correspondence suggests, developed severely poor relations with his bank. The *seria* and *buffa* works towards which Mapleson's efforts were weighted in these years—*Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Lucrezia Borgia*, *La sonnambula* and *Norma*—would have been the least expensive productions to create and revive. They were among the easiest to cast, since they involved few principals (soprano, tenor, baritone and, in some cases, a mezzo or bass) and were, for the most part, light lyric roles which most Italianate singers would have in their repertoire; Tietjens, the staple of Mapleson's company, ably traversed the exceptionally heavier parts (the heroines *Lucrezia* and *Norma*). Issues of contemporary performance practice are as yet unclear but the musical requirements of these Italian opera genres enabled a numerically lean band and chorus to execute them with reasonable success.¹⁰⁶ When his small company essayed the fuller orchestrations of Meyerbeer and Verdi, it allegedly met with shoddy results.¹⁰⁷

Further, Italian *opera seria* and *buffa* would also have been easier for Mapleson to take on the road for his tournées, the activity critical to his survival. As *The Times* remarked, 'That the winter repertory will be selected from the most familiar works is doubtless a matter of necessity.'¹⁰⁸ Again, these works were easiest to transport and required the engagement of the fewest singers. A weekly pay list from one of Mapleson's tours from a later year, 1881, reveals that the tours were more labour intensive than

¹⁰⁶ Dideriksen, 'Repertory and Rivalry.'

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, *Times*, 17 June 1861.

¹⁰⁸ *Times*, 15 November 1869.

London seasons: singers comprised 50% of weekly expenses, and orchestra (17%), chorus (8%), ballet (4%) and supers (1%) comprised another 30% so keeping the number of artistic personnel low was a priority.¹⁰⁹ Arditi concedes that Mapleson took only a 'scratch' lot of musicians on these tours.¹¹⁰ A second reason Mapleson presented these works, as the *Times* comment cited above indicates, is that they had the most widespread appeal. The popular bent of Mapleson's autumn and winter programming may have influenced the programming of the London season: since Mapleson toured these Italian works with several of his principal singers, it follows that he would present them in these works during the London season as a way to prepare them for the tour.¹¹¹

The venue complications of the 1860s and their attendant financial conditions clearly played a role in shaping the kind of work which each manager could stage. These institutional issues provide the broad framework within which the impresarios carried out the day-to-day management of their enterprises. The next two chapters will consider the dynamic between these more minute concerns of artistic management and the programming of specific works.

¹⁰⁹ Weekly pay list, 19 March 1881, Mapleson Music Library.

¹¹⁰ Arditi, 153.

¹¹¹ Arditi, 185-86.

Chapter 4

The Pursuit of New Works

The financial uncertainties which plagued Gye and Mapleson created an environment unfavourable to the production of certain genres and of new works generally. Nevertheless, in order to differentiate their companies in the eyes of the public, each manager needed to compete for and present new operas. The florid, sometimes bombastic prospectuses which heralded artistic plans for the opera seasons suggest that the managers intended to produce a number of novelties each year. Beginning in the late 1850s, however, a new set of practices for identifying, securing and preparing new works directly influenced and in many cases limited what could be presented. This chapter will examine the intricate process for importing a new work to London.

Commitment to Novelty

The prospectuses the managers issued at the beginning of each season present an historical problem. Should we take these bold and well-articulated artistic statements at face value, that is, as evidence of clear-cut, even visionary artistic policies? Or were they really little more than hyperbole, which no one took very seriously? Historical opinion is divided. Bernard Shaw denounced these 'absurd high-falutin' prospectuses,' and the music critic Joseph Bennett called them 'a most mendacious production, which sought to win public favour by promises seldom kept, and by bluff and brag which deceived nobody.'¹ More biased observers, such as Arditi and Wyndham, maintain they were serious documents through which the impresario communicated their plans.²

¹ Shaw, *The Star*, 20 September 1888, cited in *Shaw's Music*, 1:524; see also *Shaw's Music*, 1:711; Bennett, 192.

² Arditi, 165; Wyndham, 193.

Ultimately, Gye's diaries serve as the best guide for gauging the sincerity and importance of these advertisements, for they reveal how the impresario viewed them and how different industry professionals used them. In a few instances, Gye announced a work in his prospectus for publicity purposes only; he told Anton Rubinstein's agent 'that altho' I could not give "Nero" this season I thought it would be advisable to put it in the prospectus as it would make people talk about it but that of course it would be necessary for him & me to make a contract about it before the prospectus was published.'³ Usually, Gye invested considerable time in writing these documents and viewed them as an important promotion of his plans. At the time of writing, he sometimes knew that his ability to present a certain work or singer was tenuous, but there is no indication that he inserted a trumped up promise intending to break it.

The audience and many critics took these advertisements seriously. Prospective subscribers and, to a lesser degree, booksellers based subscription decisions solely upon their contents. All these constituencies severely criticized the impresario if any promised work did not appear by the end of the season. Since booksellers often paid the impresario throughout the opera season, non-fulfillment could even put final installments at risk; towards the end of the 1863 season Gye wrote, 'Panteau [Gye's treasurer] went to the booksellers to make the monthly collection today & T. Chappell told him that some of the "trade" had been considering as to the policy of resisting their last instalment to me on the ground of my not fulfilling the contents of my programme.'⁴ Such a breach of credibility could also imperil the following season's subscription and the manager's ability to secure loans. With promises left unfulfilled each year, Shaw, Bennett and others had reason to be disillusioned and may well have viewed the prospectuses' embellished style skeptically. Nevertheless, the impresario was expected to keep these promises and felt

³ GD, 9 March 1877. Émile Perrin had commissioned Rubinstein's *Néron* for the Opéra in the mid-1860s, but by the time it was completed, Perrin was no longer *administrateur*. The work had its première in Hamburg two years after Gye's conversation (*New Grove Opera*, 3:573).

⁴ GD, 25 June 1863. A letter from Gye to Costa, (12 August 1866, Item 18 in MC Papers) and several from Mapleson to Ransom & Bouverie (Barclay's Records Services) suggest that at season's end some subscribers still owed money as well.

the repercussions if he did not; we must therefore view these documents as credible expressions of the manager's plans for the season—plans with at least some possibility of realization— and not mere puffery.

These announcements demonstrate that the managers' artistic policies were more progressive than the analysis of repertoire in chapter 2 suggested. In 1863, Gye announced the English première of *La forza del destino*, the Royal Italian Opera's first performances of *La fille du régiment* and Flotow's *Alessandro Stradella*, the first performances since the fire of *L'étoile du Nord* and *L'elisir d'amore*, and a revival of Gluck's rarely performed *Orfeo ed Eurydice*⁽³⁾. Mapleson's equally ambitious announcement included the English premières of *Faust* under Gounod's supervision, *Niccolò de' Lapi* under its composer Francesco Schira and, like Gye, *La forza del destino* but with Verdi producing it. He also announced the reappearance of *Linda di Chamounix*, *Oberon* and *Fidelio* after long absences. If presented, each set of works would have significantly invigorated each company's repertoire, representing respectively one third and nearly one half of the artistic programme. These announcements, typical for this period in the number and scope of new operas listed, signalled artistic policies which struck a balance between popular standards, forgotten classics and genuinely new operas.

In practice, however, the managers invariably announced a greater number of novelties than they ultimately presented. With Gye's company in 1863, only *L'elisir* and *La fille* appeared, the latter performed only twice at the very end of the season. Similarly, Mapleson limited his novelties to *Faust* (not under Gounod's supervision), *Niccolò de' Lapi* (performed three times and then withdrawn) and *Oberon*. The following year, Gye redeemed a promise to produce *L'étoile du Nord* and Rossini's *Otello* but did not present the more unfamiliar *Fidelio*, *La forza del destino*, and *Die Lustigen Weiber von Windsor*. Mapleson announced a particularly startling set of new works: *La forza del destino*, *Fidelio*, *Der Freischütz*, *Die Lustigen Weiber von Windsor* (*Le donne allegre di Windsor* and later redubbed *Falstaff*) and *Tannhäuser*. This attempt to assimilate a spectrum of German fare had a missionary flavour to it and would

have been unprecedented on the Italian stage in London; with regard to the first announcement of a Wagner opera in England, Mapleson took pride in introducing to the public a 'comparatively unknown school of dramatic music.'⁵ Nevertheless, of all these novelties, Mapleson only presented *Fidelio* and *Falstaff*. He shelved *Tannhäuser* a second time the following season and the work did not appear in London for another twelve years. Clearly, Gye and Mapleson announced a greater number of novelties in these prospectuses than they ultimately presented, their plans more bold than their artistic records suggest.

Finding New Works

The trend to announce relatively few new operas and then to produce even fewer stemmed neither from poor planning nor from a lack of commitment to novelty. Rather, the trend was a result of several phenomena. A cumbersome process for securing the rights to new works, the individual tastes of the manager and competitive programming all delimited the number and type of operas a manager announced in his prospectus before each season. Production economics and the vicissitudes of rehearsals in a hierarchical institution then played a major part in determining whether or not the work actually appeared.

The first challenge for an opera impresario was to identify new works suitable for London. Contrary to what one would expect, the increasing ease and speed of continental train travel from the early 1840s and the advent of the telegraph in 1855 introduced changes to this process which may have adversely affected the importation of new works. Earlier, a manager in London would have either commissioned a work specifically for his theatre or depended upon the recommendations of his singers, agents or business associates who had attended continental premières. As travel to continental venues became easier, however, managers increasingly insisted to see the work

⁵ Her Majesty's Theatre Prospectus, *Times*, 12 March 1864.

themselves, rather than accept the suggestions of others.⁶ Yet continental travel was time-consuming and infrequent, particularly if business matters at home were pressing. Up until the mid-1860s, Gye travelled to the Continent twice a year to seek out new works and talent: in October/November after the autumn tenant took over Covent Garden and the continental opera houses began their seasons, and in February/March before the start of the London season. From 1865 onwards, debt complications, attempts to sell the opera concern, and for a brief time, the Knox case, forced Gye to curtail his scouting expeditions to the February trip only. This decrease in scouting activity limited the number of new operas he could attend.⁷ For some composers—those with a proven record of success such as Meyerbeer or Verdi—Gye might arrange to present a work without having seen it. Yet even then, he endeavoured to see it before the London performances and, if displeased, stayed with his plans only on the faith that the composer's reputation would guarantee some degree of success: 'Went to hear the 2 first acts of *Le Pardon* [de Ploërmel] - It is heavy & I doubt a continued success in London apart from what any work of Meyerbeer's must produce.'⁸ What little information exists suggests that Mapleson travelled to the Continent infrequently in the 1860s; since he usually led his troupe on extensive tours of the British provinces during the winter season, his ability to scour the Continent for new works was far more limited. Herein might lie one reason why Mapleson presented fewer new works than Gye during this period.⁹

⁶ *A Handbook for Travellers to France* from 1843 (London: John Murray), reveals that while the trip from London to Dover took five hours by rail and the steamer from Dover to Calais took three hours, a *diligence* from Calais to Paris took 24 hours. By the 1860s, Gye usually completed the entire journey in eleven hours (GD, 3 December 1860, 28 December 1861).

⁷ See Lowenberg, *Annals*, Gheusi, 'Histoire du Théâtre des Italiens de Paris,' and Octave Fouque, *Histoire du Théâtre-Ventadour, 1829-79* (Paris: G. Fischbacher, 1881).

⁸ GD, 29 April 1859.

⁹ The *Memoirs* only mention trips to Paris before the 1861 season, to Naples, Turin and Paris after the 1862 season and to Paris before the 1867 season. Charles Santley recalls seeing Mapleson at the Théâtre Lyrique in November 1864 (*Student and Singer*, 233). Mapleson often seemed to rely upon the recommendations of his conductor, Luigi Arditi, and his acting manager, Henry Jarrett.

If impresarios valued seeing a work before presenting it, then obviously the destination visited played an important role in shaping artistic policy. The fact that fifteen of the 25 works Gye introduced to London during his career had their first performances in Paris is only in part a reflection of that city's rise to the forefront of operatic innovation beginning in the 1840s; it also stems from Gye's marked preference for that city and its culture.¹⁰ From 1861 to 1867, Gye travelled to Paris two or three times each year, Berlin four times total and Milan only twice. On the most basic level, this preference may have been related to the fact that Gye spoke French but no other foreign languages.¹¹ His francophilia may have been nurtured at a young age as his family took pride in its French heritage, tracing the family to a Huguenot leader.¹² Over time, he developed a network of Paris-based impresarios, agents and publishers, most notably Maurice Strakosch, Bernard Ullman, Prosper Bagier, Léon Carvalho, Émile Perrin, Antoine de Choudens, Louis Brandus and Léon Escudier. These contacts served as clearinghouses for information received from composers, singers and theatres, and enabled Gye to follow the progress and success of new works. He also recruited most singers from Parisian opera houses, with the intention to replicate at the Royal Italian Opera the new works which achieved success in Paris. Mapleson did not have as extensive or as loyal a network in Paris as Gye, although he allegedly spoke fluent French and Italian.¹³ He surely had contacts in Italy from his three-year attempt at tenor

¹⁰ The figure of fifteen includes Cagnoni's *Don Bucefalo*, which had its première at the Milan conservatory 28 June 1847. The opera probably came to the Royal Italian Opera via the Paris Théâtre Italien (see chapter 6, note 76). No single reference work comprehensively lists the venue and date of opera premières and significant subsequent productions. Lowenberg's *Annals* remain the leading resource but needs updating. Providing a rough idea of the relative operatic activity of major opera centres (1861-67), the *Annals* list 31 premières in Paris (including nine operettas), four in Vienna and two in Milan. This does not include major revivals, which the Vienna Staatsoper featured heavily (Hadamowsky, 2:626-27).

¹¹ There is no indication in the diaries or in other correspondence that Gye knew other languages. Despite spending some years as a child in Frankfurt and, later, making frequent trips to Berlin, his transactions with Germans were conducted in French. Gye also needed translation for Italian correspondence and preferred to communicate with Italians in French.

¹² Rohan, 'Descent of Rohan-Gyé,' ROHA, cf. Dideriksen and Ringel, 14.

¹³ A letter from Henry Mapleson to Richard Northcott alleges that his father's 'French & Italian were spoken as by natives' (29 August 1925, International Music Museum).

stardom in Milan, Lodi and Verona. The fact that his entire chorus in the mid-1860s came from the Teatri Regio and Liceo in Turin and many of his singers from small Italian companies supports this hypothesis.¹⁴

Aesthetic Evaluations

Once the opera manager made the journey to see a new work, there were no guarantees that he would want to present it in London. Chapter 2 suggested that the continental theatres mounted very few new works themselves and not all of these were successful, thereby diminishing the pool of prospective works for London. Among the remaining works which met with popular approval, not all would appeal to the impresario searching for the next London success. Indeed, the specific criteria by which he evaluated new works proved a formidable obstacle to the importation of new works. To some extent, these preferences were personal; fundamentally, they reflected the tastes of the London audience. Since the director-entrepreneur depended upon a stable flow of self-generated, box-office income and had his personal funds at stake, he needed to present what he predicted might prove financially remunerative. This entailed satisfying the public's demand for novelty, but hedging his risk at the same time. The safest new works were those which conformed to the plots, musical styles and scenic effects to which the audience was accustomed. Gye spoke publicly about this outlook, alluding in an announcement for a new English Opera company to 'the very natural fear of managers of limited resources to run the risk of employing composers other than those already popular with the public.'¹⁵ The managers' primary concern was to find novelty assured of box-office success, not to build appreciation for unfamiliar styles.

Gye's diaries and Mapleson's memoirs testify that an impresario judged works with audience reception in mind. Gye consistently evaluated operas with a strictly defined set

¹⁴ Her Majesty's Theatre Prospectuses, *Times*, 24 March 1863 and 12 March 1864.

¹⁵ *Times*, 12 March 1864.

of criteria, regardless of genre. He consistently praised a work according to its quotient of musical and dramatic components which made a good 'effect' in the theatre: '[W]ent to see Felicien David's new opera *Herculanum* at the Academie [1859] - I was very much pleased with it-- good scenery, dresses & mise-en-scene-- The music pleasing & with melody....The last scene the destruction of the city by the Volcano, was not managed well.'¹⁶ Later that year, upon hearing *Faust* for the first time at the Théâtre Lyrique, he wrote: 'There is some very nice flowing music, but it is of that quiet drawing room character, & so devoid of striking points that I do not think it would do for London - Mad. Carvalho was charming in Marguerite but has no florid music to sing-- which is her style.'¹⁷ These evaluations accentuate the importance Gye attached to the aspects of opera which might elicit the most immediate and powerful responses. His attention to spectacular stagings, novel dramatic and scenic techniques, and ornamented melodies reflected the distinguishing characteristics of *opera seria* (in its broad, nineteenth-century connotation) and, on a more expanded scale, *grand opéra*.

As his comment about *Faust* suggests, Gye's critical judgements also took into account how the roles in a new work served as vehicles for leading singers and the qualities he and his public associated with good singing. These included a sizable voice, a fluid, legato style, linguistic command, good acting ability, good stage presence and, ideally, good looks. Interestingly, he used similar terms to describe voices as he used to characterize operas; again, he most frequently referred to the overall 'effect' of a singer's performance. Usually in his travels, when he knew the opera but not the singers, he noted how well the singers interpreted the parts:

[S]aw the French version of Rossini's *Semiramide* in which the sisters Marchisio sang - The soprano is very ugly, but sang well altho her voice is not an agreeable one - she is no actress and has no presence for such a character as *Semiramide* - the contralto sang the music of *Arsace* extremely well but the upper part of her voice is very harsh - the duet by

¹⁶ GD, 11 March 1859. Gye told Tamberlik that he would bring *Herculanum* to London if he failed to reach an agreement with Meyerbeer for *Le pardon de Ploërmel* (GD, 1 May 1859).

¹⁷ GD, 31 December 1859.

the 2 sisters was sung to perfection - Obin was very heavy in Assur - the scenery & dresses very good.¹⁸

With a work new to him, however, Gye would think about how well the parts allowed the singers to shine. A few weeks before he saw this *Semiramide* in Paris (1860), he attended Rossini's *Le siège de Corinthe* (*L'assedio di Corinto*) in Trieste: 'It is one of the weakest of his operas I have seen - but there is some very effective music for Barytone & Contralto & also for the Prima Donna - the tenor part has little else but recitative but Tiberini introduced the famous air from Ricciardo & Zoriade [*sic*].'¹⁹ Evidence also suggests that Gye considered how well a work could highlight the scenic capabilities of his theatre.²⁰

Even with regard to the standard Italian and French genres he championed, Gye could be obtusely narrow-minded about which operas to present. Indeed, his focus on seeking new works based on the predominating criteria of 'melody' and 'effect' sometimes proved limiting and resulted in several misjudgements. *Faust*, cited above, was one famous example. *Aida* was another. At his second viewing of the opera in Turin in 1875, he wrote:

I had seen it at the Scala 2 years ago when Mesdame Stoltz & Waldman sang in it & then I thought it was an opera which for want of melody could never succeed in London-- still I was glad to have another opportunity of hearing the opera [-] first impressions are so often misleading - The piece was this evening splendidly mounted good effective scenery, beautiful dresses & good mise-en-scene - None of the singers were bad altho' none first-rate but the 2 women as Aida & Amneris were but moderate substitutes for Stoltz & Waldman - The tenor (Patierno) has a fine voice but is as big as a bullock - Madlle. Singer (Aida) has the face of a negress & the feet of an Elephant - she sang well but could not scream loud enough to please the audience except once or twice when she tried her 'hardest' & then the people were uproarious - Bedetti the contralto (Amneris) sang well & has a rather agreeable voice although apparently limited - She would not shout so she was not

¹⁸ GD, 19 November 1860.

¹⁹ GD, 10 October 1860.

²⁰ GD, 21 March 1860.

applauded & her good singing went for nothing - The band was much too loud & drowned the singers - Altogether the opera was well given but in the whole of the 3 first acts there is not a phrase of melody & the 4th appears to me to have been shorn of its most effective music - No go for London.²¹

With such a fixed conception of what an opera must *be*, he did not think the work had sufficient melodic appeal to succeed in London. Gye committed himself to presenting *Aida* in England only after its demonstrable success in the Italian opera houses of Vienna, Madrid and St. Petersburg in the winter of 1876.

Gye imposed this set of criteria upon many forms of music drama, not just well-established Italian and French genres. He found earlier styles too radically different from the one in fashion:

The Orfeo of Gluck was given for the first time here [in Berlin], at the Opera House this evening....The opera[,] if opera it can be called, is in 3 acts [-] altogether entre actes & all occupying only 2 hours - Some parts are tedious but the whole most charming & flowing melodies - The parts of Amor & Eurydice are very short & thankless to the singers that of Orpheus being the leading one....There is a little dancing in the opera[,] the music of which is simple & beautiful - Orfeo would be sure of a succès d'estime at Covent Garden, but would be doubtless voted a bore by the Abonnés - 3 women & no man in an opera would be too great a novelty for them!²²

Gye staged *Orfeo* in 1860 but never revived it. Most other classical works were rejected outright by the same critical process. In 1863, he deemed *Così fan tutte* at the Théâtre Italien 'charming music but old fashioned libretto and very dull.'²³ Likewise, *Die Zauberflöte* did not conform to what Gye thought his audience would expect: 'There were 10 separate scenes one of them being used twice - the music must of course always

²¹ GD, 17 January 1875.

²² GD, 15 October 1854.

²³ GD, 12 February 1863. *Così* would not be performed at Covent Garden until 1910.

be charming but I almost fear our London public would not have patience enough to sit out the whole opera especially the latter part.²⁴

Less is known about Mapleson's aesthetics and his evaluation of voices and roles. A letter suggests that he had a more sophisticated understanding of vocal technique:

Very bad accounts of [the soprano] Lodi who is described by the best judges possible as an Amateur[:] agreeable voice fair agilita but has every thing to learn, does not know first principles of her art, cannot take breath properly is without sentiment or expression her voice is all in aria and she sings sharp all the evening (This Bettini who was in Milan also confirms). She has no idea of moving her arms and she places her hands all the evening as if she was praying[. I]n fact a fiasco is predicted. I hope to God she will study to remedy these defects as they are serious.²⁵

Mapleson appears to be comfortable with the technical terminology of vocal production, whereas Gye never described voices with such precision.

Mapleson also seemed to embrace a different set of aesthetics than his rival, especially with regard to the classical repertoire; in 1865, he launched a revival of forgotten masterworks. In his announcement of this policy, he trumpeted the musical appeal of the works and his interest in educating the public. In truth, he produced these works at the instigation of his astute acting manager, Henry Jarrett, and, quite likely, for more practical reasons than his claims to enhance musical appreciation would suggest.²⁶ Jarrett had produced a successful *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* at Drury Lane in 1854. He undoubtedly could counsel that these works were more appropriate than *grand opéra* for Mapleson's modest ensemble. The unique musical and dramatic demands of these works were also perfectly suited to the talents of Thérèse Tietjens. A further explanation

²⁴ GD, 30 October 1864.

²⁵ Mapleson letter to P. Mazzoni, undated but probably mid-1870s, International Music Museum. The letter is partly problematic in that it leaves unclear whether Mapleson conveys his own impressions or those of other 'judges'; the reference to Bettini suggests the latter. Mapleson did mention the singer in an earlier letter to Joseph Bennett, so perhaps this report draws upon his recollection (Mapleson letter to Bennett, 1869, cited in Bennett, 192-93).

²⁶ Arditi, 152 and 161.

for Mapleson's foray into this corner of the repertoire was that his roster of singers, unlike Gye's, was mostly unknown to the English public, so he needed to depend more upon his programming as a way to create a distinct image for his company. The choice of classical repertoire was shrewd, for the newspaper critics were particularly supportive of older works which, they felt, possessed great musical merit. With this policy, Mapleson's company won unanimous critical acclaim for the first time. Mapleson's financial difficulties of the early 1860s illustrated the futility of competing directly with Gye's repertoire and starry casts; the classical repertoire, like the cheap night schemes he introduced, enabled him to use his company efficiently, distinguish his company from Gye's and attract favourable publicity.²⁷

The contrast in the two impresarios' tastes carried over to German opera. By the early 1860s, there had already been several attempts to establish a foothold for this genre in London, most notably a venture of E. T. Smith and Jarrett at Drury Lane in 1854 which announced a repertoire including works by Heinrich August Marschner and Peter Joseph von Lindpainter.²⁸ By the early 1860s, the impetus to enliven the repertoire with German works was too strong to ignore. Gye told Maurice Strakosch before the 1864 season, 'of my idea of giving the Opera *Die Lustigen Weiber* in German - his opinion was against mixing up the Italian & German opera but thought German opera alone would be a good spec.'²⁹ Fundamentally, Gye seems to have shared this belief, for two weeks later he wrote in the announcement for an English Opera company, referred to earlier, 'Among [foreign schools of composition] great resources are to be found, for there are many operas, particularly of the German school, not of sufficient calibre for our great Italian stage, and therefore almost entirely unknown to the English public.'³⁰ To Gye, German opera was inappropriate for Italian conversion, ostensibly because it did not emulate the

²⁷ *Times*, 14 June 1869.

²⁸ Royal Opera, Drury Lane Prospectus, 1854, Mapleson scrapbook, Mapleson Music Library.

²⁹ GD, 26 February 1864.

³⁰ English Opera Association Prospectus, *Times*, 12 March 1864.

melodic quotient and dramatic structure of Italian works. His reviews of German operas reflect this idea: 'We heard the 2 first acts of Weber's Opera Euryanthe which I stayed [in Berlin] especially to hear - It is the most rasping music I ever heard and enough to kill the singers, the women especially....The Opera would never do in London and I am glad to have heard it as it has often been suggested to me.'³¹

Wagner's operas, too, suffered in the early 1860s from these aesthetics. That the managers even considered Wagner in the early 1860s was surprising. Davison had long built up the argument against the composer in the *Musical World*, based mostly upon his theories and writings but also upon the concert performances of 1855.³² The failure of *Tannhäuser* at the Opéra in 1861 should have dissuaded the London managers from presenting his work for a long time, given the degree to which popular taste in London took its cue from Paris. Gye persevered in his desire to see one of these much-discussed music dramas and stayed in Vienna for two extra days during his continental trip of 1863 for *Lohengrin*. Unfortunately, the travel diary which would have contained his commentary is among the lacunae in the diary collection. Emma Albani's memoirs hint at Gye's reaction: 'he made a curious prophecy on leaving the Vienna Opera House, where he had gone expressly to hear "Lohengrin" for the first time. As he came away he said, "It is *fine*; but if that is to be the music of the future, there will be neither singers nor composers left.'" More insightful is the diary of Clara Gye, who accompanied her father to the theatre on this and many other continental trips and whose interpretations usually matched his own:

[A]ll his music is said 'to belong to the future' - it may, but at present it is beyond endurance, wearisome, for fine as the orchestral writing is, & original as are many of his effects, there is not a note of [mel: cancelled] real melody from beginning to end, not an air that would be listened to in a drawing room or on a military band, & nothing that can be remembered

³¹ GD, 1 February 1865.

³² After a *Tannhäuser* excerpt, Davison wrote in the *Musical World* 'though eccentric' the music had 'some curious and striking points.' Three weeks later, after the *Tannhäuser* overture, he wrote that it was 'such queer stuff that criticism would be thrown away upon it' (Scholes, 252).

afterwards - the story is a ridiculous fairy one & at the end a swan that swims about with the hero, turns into the lost brother of the heroine! The mise-en-scène altogether was good & must be expensive - The singers were Schmid (the King), Beck (Friedrick), Ander (Lohengrin), Dustmann (Elsa), & Destin (Friedrick's wife) - The last is an extremely clever tragic actress; all the rest sang well but how they can ever learn the music is a marvel - We stayed to the end.³³

With the fairly safe assumption that Clara's comments paralleled her father's in this instance, the comment again reveals an attempt to evaluate Wagner in terms of Italian opera. In this case, his music achieved dramatic 'effect' but did not divide into distinct numbers the public could absorb. Clara Gye's qualification of 'real' melody is a particularly rich emendation, for Wagner's early opera is infused with lyrical writing; what she seems to mean by 'real' melody is 'Italian' melody of the *bel canto* variety.

Mapleson proved fairly more adventurous with regard to Wagner, at least in intention if not in execution. His prospectus of 1864 heralded his desire to introduce the public to an unknown school of music with *Tannhäuser*. His *Memoirs* attest that he commissioned an Italian version of the work and *The Times* indicates that he even put it into rehearsal, although it was not produced.³⁴ The following year, the work was again announced and not produced but he and Arditi used the performance materials that autumn, presenting a montage of *Tannhäuser* highlights at a concert series with an orchestra of approximately 108.³⁵ In his *Memoirs*, he later claimed that some 'critical friends' convinced him not to stage that particular Wagner opera, given its reception in

³³ Diary of Clara Gye, 18 October 1863, Gye diary collection, ROHA. Albani's observation comes from her memoirs, *Forty Years of Song* (London: Mills and Boon, 1911), 112. The soprano was only fifteen when Gye saw *Lohengrin* in 1863, and probably got her information from Clara Gye, her confidante.

³⁴ *MM*, 88 and *Times*, 26 March 1864. Mapleson claimed in the papers that, after the tremendous success of *Faust*, he postponed the production that year in order to produce Gounod's *Mireille*.

³⁵ *Times*, 2 December 1865, specifies the number of instrumentalists in each section of the orchestra (105 in all), except for the percussion section. Libretti for the Royal Italian Opera (ROHA) list orchestra members at different years, and suggest that a typical percussion section at that time included a drum, bass drum and triangle.

Paris a few years before. One of these advisers may have included Jarrett who guided him instead to the more modestly scaled classical repertoire.

Ease of Preparation

In evaluating new works, the managers also speculated about how easy or difficult it would be to prepare for the Italian stage in London. This consideration often militated against the presentation of a particular work or genre of works. Whereas Italian operas could be imported as written, *grands opéras* needed to be translated into Italian and cut to conform to the expected performance time, between 3 and 3½ hours including intervals. *Opéra comique*, one of the most fertile sources of composition during this period, required more than straightforward translation of the libretto. It was felt, in the case of Ambroise Thomas' *Mignon*, that 'the setting of the dialogue to accompanied recitative for the Italian stage of course gives additional weight to the opera.'³⁶ But this practice bore its own pitfalls. As Gye remarked in Paris,

Went to Opera Comique and saw for the first time Herold's Opera *Le Pré aux Clercs* - I have often been advised to do this opera at R.I.O. but I now do not think it is fit for the Italian stage - There is the common difficulty in these dialogue operas-- so much of the plot depends on the dialogue that the action is not understood when turned into recitative.³⁷

The process of commissioning orchestrated recitative to replace dialogue was not unknown—Gye employed Meyerbeer to do so for *Dinorah* in 1859 and Auber for *Le domino noir* in 1868—but it was time-consuming, expensive and potentially detrimental to the action.³⁸

³⁶ *Times*, 11 July 1870.

³⁷ GD, 25 November 1860.

³⁸ A close analysis of this issue is beyond the scope of this study and will be addressed in Gabriella Dideriksen's dissertation. The music materials of the Royal Opera House Archives lend ample support to the claim that dialogue extracts did not always work elegantly or coherently when converted into recitative for performance on the Italian stage. A full examination would consider in detail an example such as the recitative version of the first dialogue of *Der Freischütz* (I.ii). After it was scored, the

Production costs also influenced the impresario's decision about what new works to present. The financial accounts of the Royal Italian Opera reveal very little about production cost components, recorded generally as 'Sundries' and 'Pay List'.³⁹ The diaries provide a few clues to general production costs, however. After his first season in the new theatre, Gye told his bankers that the costumes, properties and music for recreating opera productions had cost £22,000; he produced eleven works that season, an average of £2,000 per production.⁴⁰ In 1870, during the Gye-Mapleson coalition, George Wood competed with the Royal Italian Opera in a new operatic venture at Drury Lane. Of the seventeen operas he produced, eleven already belonged to the theatre stock.⁴¹ Wood told Gye 'that he had only lost at Drury Lane this past season the sum which his dresses & scenery had cost him - he said the dresses had cost upwards of £6,000 & I suppose the scenery about £3,000-- but I believe he or someone else lost much more.'⁴² This comment suggests that each of Wood's six new works cost an average of £1,500 to produce, less than one at the Royal Italian Opera, although the cost might have been understated. Gye's estimate that scenery cost £3,000 reveals further that

recitative was cut by 63 bars, likely because the slower pace of musical expression protracted the time between the numbers of greater interest. Only a few principal narrative points survive these cuts: the discovery that Max missed his shots; Kaspar tells Max he must go into the woods and seek the protection of the Black Huntsman; and Kuno admonishes Max that if he does not succeed in the trial shot the next day, he will lose the hand of his daughter. Lost in the transformation from the original dialogue to this Italian performance version, however, are textual elements which inform the background of the drama as well as the relationships and motivations of the characters. Killian and Kuno's denouncement of Kaspar were not scored as recitative at all. The history of the trial shot and the concept of the magic bullet, so critical to establishing the supernatural atmosphere of the opera, are entirely omitted. What remains is a meager sketch of the action, which provides little foundation for understanding subsequent developments.

³⁹ Before 1870, these items are all under the category of 'Sundries' and, from 1871, Gye renamed it 'Pay List.' Both categories seem to have indicated opera personnel and materials.

⁴⁰ GD, 21 October 1858. It is unclear whether Gye transferred production materials from the Lyceum to the Royal Italian Opera in 1858, which would have meant that he created only four productions in the latter season. If this were the case, it is likely that the £22,000 referred to the nineteen productions he created between 1856 and 1858, although this too is unclear. Considering Gye's statement to Costa that Calzado of the Théâtre Italien lent him materials for the Lyceum, it may be best to assume that the £22,000 corresponds to eleven productions newly created in the 1858 season.

⁴¹ Mapleson had produced these eleven works at Drury Lane in 1868.

⁴² GD, 12 August 1870.

this expense would have typically been one-half that of costumes.⁴³ The Coutts ledgers suggest, though not conclusively, that personnel costs for commissioning scenery and costumes was £200 per production.⁴⁴ Each new opera therefore consumed 3.5% of an opera season's receipts. The expense of other production personnel and performance rights would have increased that percentage. At a time when Gye and Mapleson were already pressured to pay a considerable percentage of their opera season income to meet debt payments, the tradeoff was a clear one.

Certain genres cost more than others. When the Royal English Opera wanted to rent costumes and scenery from Gye for their season at Covent Garden, a typical arrangement, Gye charged £800 for the use of the production of *Masaniello* and £300 for the more simply scaled *Martha*. Barclay's Records Services contain a document which provides even more potent evidence for this assertion: *An Inventory of the Operatic Wardrobe including the Armoury & Music Library at Her Majesty's Theatre, Haymarket*. This fascinating list, compiled by Newtons' Auctioneers & Estate Agents in December 1880 and January 1881, was prepared at the behest of Ransom & Bouverie, to whom Mapleson consigned his theatre stock as security. This inventory includes the materials for 33 productions to which Mapleson had recourse since his return to Her Majesty's Theatre in 1877. Although the period is slightly later than the one under consideration, this 467-page list is valuable for suggesting the relative scale of different productions from this period. It notes on the right side of each page the opera to which each costume belonged. Table 8 offers a comparative view of the stock required for three different types of productions: a *grand opéra* (*Les Huguenots*), an *opera seria* (*Lucia*) and a 'classical' opera (*Der Freischütz*); this list includes only items marked specifically for those operas and not the stock marked as 'ballet' or 'various,' from which these productions might also have drawn.

⁴³ It is unclear whether the last part of Gye's comment means that Wood's productions cost more than was stated or that the opera company itself lost more money for other reasons.

⁴⁴ In the 1864 ledgers, for example, Gye paid the scenic artist Grieve £48 and *artiste costumier* Hennier £344 for the scenery and costumes for the new productions of *Stradella* and *L'étoile du Nord*.

Table 8: Inventories

Les Huguenots

24 Royal Guard Hats
53 nobles hats
3 cloth skull caps
6 pages hats scarlet velvet white feather trimmed gold
4 pairs balck velvet shoes turret with satin robes
1 violet velvet skirt trimmed gold lace
1 blue body long hanging sleeves trimmed silver
1 dress trimmed silver
1 net veil
1 brown velvet body with white satin sleeves chequered gold and velvet to match
1 white satin body trimmed silver long hanging sleeves turlatan chemisette chequered silver
1 Brown cloth jacket & trunks trimmed with steel buttons
1 pair brown velvet trunks
1 drab cloth jacket
1 pair brown cloth trunks
1 violet velvet jacket & trunks
1 white cloth jacket & trunks
1 black velvet jacket trunks and hanging sleeves trimmed bugles
1 fine black velvet jacket trimmed with bugles & black satin padded trunks to match & black velvet cloak lined hanging sleeves
1 old black velvet jacket trunks & belts trimmed with bugles
1 brown velvet shape trunks & cloak trimmed gold and blue satin
1 sword with gilt handle & 2 scabbards velvet & gilt
1 pair white silk tights
1 pair brown silk tights
1 brown velvet hat & feathers
63 various coloured velvet shapes
63 trunks
63 belts
44 jackets
3 pairs trunks
4 old blue pages dresses & velvet jackets
2 old crimson pages dresses
2 old blue pages dresses
6 crimson velvet cloaks
8 old gold tissue & black velvet dresses
1 old gold tissues & black velvet dresses
1 pearl headress

Les Huguenots (cont.)

1 old silver tissue dress
3 old marino draperies
7 white serge gowns
3 white serge hood and capes
3 black serge hood and capes
1 pair grey satin breeches
1 white cloth jacket trimmed gold
1 pair trunks for ditto
1 scarlet velvet cloak
1 piece velvet jacket trunks & cloak trimmed with gold
1 violet velvet jacket with hanging sleeves trimmed gold & trunks to match same
1 crimson velvet shape trimmed gold & grey satin & trunks to ditto
4 white serge capes & hoods
12 scarlet merino draperies
1 Grenadine over dress trimmed lace (lady's)
2 bodices black velvet
3 sets of velvet tabs
1 bundle old lace hooks buttons
1 packet gold and silver
1 velvet hat
1 Dark green velvet dress
1 white satin body trimmed silver
1 white silver head dress trimmed pearl beads
1 pair tarlatan sleeves
1 white satin 1/2 petticoat
1 packet hieroglyphics [sic]
16 white long muslin dresses with muslin veils & satin
12 pearl head dresses
4 pair puffed tarlatan sleeves
5 black merino dresses with stoles & head dresses
8 red and green skirts merino with bodice trimmed hieroglyphics
1 blue silk dress with two bodices trimmed silver
12 tarlatan veils
16 hats and feathers worsted various colours
1 violet cotton velvet dress trimmed with gold
4 merino hats and two worsted feathers
4 chequered satin chemisettes
4 velvet bands
1 white brocaded silk dress trimmed gold embroidery
1 gold and jewelled body & wrap
1 maroon velvet dress trimmed with silver
12 cap velvet to match
1 tarlatan dress velvet body & muslin chemisette

Les Huguenots (cont.)

5 mitres
13 velvet hats
7 belts velvet trimmed with gold
1 plain velvet belt
1 velvet hat
1 sword carriage belt to match
1 felt hat
1 fleece & ribbon
7 pairs black velvet turret shoes
6 pairs crimson velvet trimmed with gold blue robes
1 crimson hat principal
1 straight belt
1 pair high boots Morocco leather
1 pair of spurs with strap to match
1 pair leather gauntlets
1 dagger and sheath
1 pair white kid shoes lady's
13 satin hats (lady's)
29 pairs satin sleeves trimmed silver (lady's)
6 Aprons (lady's)
5 pairs short sleeves (lady's)
13 pairs robes (lady's)
39 turrett velvet trimmed silver and gold (lady's)
19 chemisettes chequered silver (lady's)
38 robes velvet (lady's)
1 pair satin sleeves (lady's)
3 pair small velvet sleeves (lady's)
8 black & red merino skirts (lady's)
2 trimmings for skirts (lady's)
2 bodices velvet trimmed gold (lady's)
15 white collars & head pieces (lady's)
2 black stoles (lady's)
20 head pieces & collars (lady's)
7 pairs Tarlatan sleeves (lady's)
15 head dresses velvet & pink (lady's)
1 pair robes (lady's)
16 white muslin bather's dresses (lady's)
1 grey satin dress trimmed gold and pink
1 brown cotton velvet trimmed gold and plain green stain
1 brown silk velvet dress trimmed gold
1 white muslin negligee trimmed lace
8 green silk velvet drain dress trimmed gold flowers
5 velvet hats

Lucia

31 Huntsman's black felt caps
36 chorus peasants (felt hats)
36 felt light hats
30 pairs of bows for shoes
8 pairs bows silk
3 felt hats trimmed with gold
2 pairs rosettes
29 pairs patent leather shoes with bows
44 pairs russett gauntlets
9 odd russett gauntlets
1 old white silk slip
1 white corded silk slip
1 Blue silk dress trimmed plaid
1 poplin scarf
1 white lace negligee
1 plaid poplin scarf
1 pair gray silk sleeves
1 white satin dress and trimmed lace pearls & silver
1 lace over dress
1 white silk slip trimmed lace
1 muslin negligee
1 balck velvet body trimmed blue satin
1 white satin body trimmed
3 green cloth shapes & trunks for principals
1 black velvet shape and trunks for principals
1 blue velvet shape trunks & cloaks for principals
33 plum shirts
44 white collars
4 old blue velvet jackets trunks trimmed red & white shirts
4 green velvet capes trimmed gold
3 green velvet capes trunks
5 jackets ditto
33 white calico gowns
35 velvet jackets trunks cloaks and belts various colors trimmed gold
11 jackets & trunks
23 belts
31 green and serge shapes trunks trimmed yellow

Der Freischütz

1 Scarlet hat
12 Delaine skirts trimmed stamped velvet
32 velvet and merino skirts
7 tarlatan skirts & bodices trimmed silver
1 white dress calico
2 white turlatan dresses trimmed pink and silver and pink satin dresses
2 white turlatan dresses trimmed white satin and one white satin body
1 blue merino skirt trimmed balck velvet
1 red merino skirt
1 black cotton velvet body
1 blue merino dress trimmed black velvet
1 black velvet pocket
1 satin dress trimmed green & silver
1 green satin pocket
8 striped serge shirts Demon dresses
8 striped serge demon dresses
6 black worsted dresses trimmed grey cloth
1 old black velvet shape trunks & shirt for principal
1 green cloth shape & trunks
1 green merino shape & trunks
1 green merino shape black trunks & green
78 red cloaks

It is unclear precisely who compiled this inventory and its accuracy is dubious: certainly, '8 red and green skirts merino with bodice trimmed hieroglyphics' and '1 packet hieroglyphics' belong to *Aida*, not *Les Huguenots*. Most likely, Mapleson's stage manager or Mapleson himself led an accountant through each room of the theatre and identified an entire rack or box as belonging to a specific opera, without examining each item; along these lines, it is possible that an opera was assigned more or less than its actual share. If we assume, however, that the inventory is grounded in some basis of actual practice, it is immediately apparent that *Huguenots*, with seven principals, sixteen additional featured singers and requirements for a large chorus in a series of varied *tableaux*, demanded an enormously greater investment than *Lucia* or *Freischütz*. Clearly, the lists for the latter two operas are far from complete; there is no suggestion, for example, of what the male choristers would have worn in the latter opera. Such lacunae are significant, though, for they suggest that these operas would have drawn substantially from the general wardrobe stock, labelled 'various,' which included such items as '25 pairs black cotton gloves,' '33 lace cravats' and '191 various colored worsted tights.' Taken as a whole, the inventory confirms that *grand opéras* such as *Faust*, *Huguenots* and *Aida*, with their opulent and distinctive *tableaux*, demanded more exclusive and newly created stock than *opere serie* such as *Lucia*, *Lucrezia* and *Sonnambula*.

The cost of a new production absolutely influenced the impresario's programming decisions. In January 1859, for example, as Gye began to face his first year of paying back the Trustees, he discussed with Meyerbeer importing his new work, *Le pardon de Ploërmel*: 'I said I must know now whether he would give me the opera as if I had not that I must prepare some other novelty - I told him if I did have his opera I should [present] nothing else new this season - he asked me if I should do his Etoile du Nord - I said not this year, as it would cost too much.'⁴⁵ Four days later he refused to produce

⁴⁵ GD, 23 January 1859.

Macbeth for Giulia Grisi on the same grounds. The following year, he again rejected *L'étoile du Nord* because of its expense.⁴⁶

Operetta, particularly the works of Offenbach, lacked appeal for precisely this reason. Musically, Gye enjoyed the genre's prominent melodies and light spirit and he regularly attended the Bouffes Parisien^{es} through the 1860s. In March 1863, he discussed with Offenbach the possibility of creating or importing a 'petite opera' for London but upon seeing *Les bavards*, felt 'Offenbach's music very sparkling and pretty-- but the piece is too extravagant, too long and requires too many people for R.I.O.'⁴⁷ Of course, he also feared that the vulgar jokes and scanty costumes might offend his audience.⁴⁸ He did, however, support and share in the revenue of John Russell's production of *La grande Duchesse de Gérolstein* at Covent Garden in the autumn of 1867. With this genre, Mapleson was less flexible than with others. He wrote,

Casting back my recollection over a long series of years I find that the only composer of undisputed influence and popularity whose propositions I could at no time accept were those of Jacques Offenbach; whom, however, in his own particular line I am far from undervaluing. The composer of *La grande duchesse de Gérolstein*, *La Belle Hélène*, and a whole series of masterpieces in the burlesque style, tried to persuade me that his works were not so comic as people insisted on believing. They had, according to him, their serious side; and he sought to convince me that *La Belle Hélène*, produced at Her Majesty's Theatre with an increased orchestra, and with a hundred or more additional voices in the chorus, would prove a genuine artistic success. I must admit that I gave a moment's thought to the matter; but the project of the amiable *maestro* was not one that I could seriously entertain.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ GD, 28 December 1860. W. C. Rockstro wryly observed in *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians* that works which were inexpensive to produce inherently held more enduring appeal than expensive ones: 'For the worthy representation of *'Fidelio,'* we need only some half-dozen principal Singers, a Chorus, an ordinary Orchestra, and a couple of Scenes such as the smallest provincial theatre could provide at a few hours' notice. For *'Der Freischütz,'* we only need, in addition to this, a few special 'properties,' and a pound or two of 'red fire.' But, in order that *'Der Ring des Nibelungen'* [*sic*] might be fitly represented, it was found necessary to build a new Theatre' (2:528).

⁴⁷ GD, 7 to 10 March 1863.

⁴⁸ See, for example, GD, 18 March 1866.

⁴⁹ MM, 305-6.

Mapleson's remarks reveal once more that the impresarios viewed the programming of their companies in static, generic terms and would not readily accept works that did not follow accepted styles.

The process for identifying new operas and the criteria for evaluating them quite clearly narrowed the range and the number of works Gye or Mapleson would even consider to import each year. To some degree, the discussion of aesthetics confirms George Bernard Shaw's claim that programming of this period suffered because of the managers' lack of artistic vision. Certainly, both managers—and Gye more than Mapleson—approached new works with a fixed definition of the qualities an opera must fulfill in order to be successful, a definition largely determined by what had been successful before. Industry economics played an important role in keeping the managers focussed along this course. Gye may have wanted to present *Orfeo* or *Die Lustigen Weiber* but he felt these works would not have satisfied what his audience expected in an Italian opera season; completely dependent upon box office receipts, with a mountain of debt to fight, he could not take such a programming risk. More recent operatic forms such as operetta and Wagnerian music drama shared the dual impediment of potential controversy and large-scale, expensive *mise-en-scène*. In the impresario's world, aesthetics could not be divorced from practical business concerns.

Exclusive performance rights

If a work satisfied the impresario, there was still no guarantee that it could be imported to England. The development of international copyright law from 1840 to 1880 required for the first time that the impresario acquire rights to perform a new work. This development played an extremely important role in shifting opera programming in many locales from the presentation of new works to the repetition of standard works. England had passed the first national copyright law in the world, the Statute of Anne in 1709, but it was the French copyright act of 1793, tying *droits d'auteur*, the rights of an author, to natural law, which stimulated the passage of similar legislation across Europe during the

Napoleonic era.⁵⁰ British copyright law did not protect public performances until the Dramatic Copyright Act of 1833 guaranteed to British playwrights and composers similar rights as they enjoyed for their printed work: rights for the entire length of their life or for 28 years after the first performance, whichever period was longer. A subsequent Copyright Act of 1842 (Talfourd's Act) extended copyright for printed and performed works to the life of the author plus seven years or 42 years, again whichever was longer. It also required authors to register a work at Stationer's Hall within three months of its appearance in order to take action against any infringement. However, the mere existence of these and twelve other copyright statutes did not necessarily mean the public understood or the court enforced them. In 1875, a Royal Commission found these laws confusing with many questions left unresolved. They were not repealed and replaced until 1911.

Although most European nations also passed national copyright laws in the early nineteenth century, the type and the term of protection varied considerably from country to country. These laws also did little to curb the international piracy of works, which left non-native authors and composers unprotected. For several reasons, the fifty years leading up to the Berne convention of 1886 witnessed a host of bilateral conventions by which two countries agreed to guarantee reciprocal rights to authors and other creative artists. The intellectual rationale for this movement rested upon the late-eighteenth century French principle of natural justice whereby an author was morally entitled to the rights of his creative labour, regardless of frontier. The ensuing half century, defined ideologically by the Romantic mythologization of author and composer as inspired creator, undoubtedly lent weight to this argument. Practically speaking, the financial interests of authors formed an important cornerstone to this movement as well: if piracy

⁵⁰ Several of the key legal manuals on modern copyright law contain excellent historical overviews, upon which the following discussion is based. These include Hugh Laddie, Peter Prescott and Mary Victoria, *The Modern Law of Copyright and Designs*, 2d ed. (London: Butterworths, 1995), E. P. Skone James, John Mummery, J. E. Rayner James, K. M. Garnet, *Copinger and Skone James on Copyright* (London: Sweet & Maxwell, 1991), and Sam Ricketson, *The Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works: 1886-1986* (London: Eastern Press, 1987). See also Simon Nowell-Smith, *International Copyright Law and the Publisher in the Reign of Queen Victoria* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968).

continued to deprive authors of financial reward, the argument went, they would lack incentive to create more. In practice, of course, the reverse was true; greater protection and remuneration for each work meant that a composer could prosper while writing less quickly and less frequently than before. As emblemized by Verdi's career, these laws contributed significantly to the slowdown in operatic composition from the 1850s onwards.

These rights were not only important to authors. Publishers obviously had reason to value them too: a British publisher who paid a French composer for the rights to print music for his new opera, for example, would no longer have to fear that an illicit pirate version could appear in England at a lower price. If this did happen, the publisher would have recourse to legal action, at least in theory. The prospect of negotiating for an *exclusive* performance right also appealed to an impresario for it conferred an important cachet and prestige to his company and an advantage over competitors. As Gye wrote in his 1867 prospectus:

The improved social relations between foreign Governments and this country have now happily been the means of establishing an equitable law of copyright between them, and this protection has lately been extended, among other things, to the rights of representation of dramatic and lyrical works. Taking advantage of this international arrangement, the Director of the Royal Italian Opera is much gratified in being able to announce that he has secured the absolutely exclusive right of representing the Opera of Don Carlos, and that of Romeo and Juliette in Great Britain.⁵¹

Since the impresario had to spend considerable sums on each new production, he very much needed the box office benefit associated with exclusivity. As Gye told Jacques Heugel in 1874, 'I could not incur the great expense of producing Mignon if another theatre were to be allowed to play it.'⁵² Without the promise of exclusivity, the impresario might lose interest in presenting a work altogether: 'Choudens came about

⁵¹ Royal Italian Opera Prospectus, *Times*, 27 March 1867.

⁵² GD, 10 March 1874. Although Gye had rights to the opera, Heugel also considered giving them to Mapleson so as not to offend Christine Nilsson, for whom the composer adapted the role for soprano.

Gounod's new opera *Mireille* - he said Gounod would not sell the exclusive right of performance in England to anyone - he wished it done at both theatres - I said that unless I could have the exclusive right I would not give the opera at all.⁵³ The rights to print the libretto, usually negotiated separately in conjunction with a British publisher, brought welcome ancillary income to the impresario.

These new reciprocal copyright agreements introduced abrupt changes to previous business practices, but they were only country-specific and each agreement was different. Although in 1852 France boldly granted protection to all works published abroad without any requirement regarding the treatment of French works in those countries, most other nations entered into more limited bilateral conventions. The United Kingdom, one of the first nations to initiate such an agreement (with Prussia in 1846), had only entered into five others by 1886: France (1851), Belgium (1854), Spain (1857), Italy (1860) and Germany (1885). In such a situation, a publisher—or, for our purposes, an impresario—would have been more inclined to deal with authors from countries that had protection agreements than those from countries which did not.⁵⁴ Such a situation provides one plausible explanation for Gye and Mapleson's preference for French and Italian works and virtual neglect of works of other national styles during this period, namely, German and Russian.

An excellent illustration of this is the case of *Lohengrin*. In the 1860s, there would have been no possibility of obtaining exclusive rights to it, for England had no convention with Germany. When Mapleson announced the work in 1868, it was apparently for Salvatore Marchesi's Italian translation which, he claims, he commissioned. He said he did not pursue the rights to perform this version since 'in England the laws relating to dramatic property seem to have been made for the advantage only of pirates and smugglers'; since *Lohengrin* originated in Germany, he could obtain a copyright for a

⁵³ GD, 23 February 1864. Three days later, dismayed by Gounod's behaviour, Mapleson and Gye agreed neither to announce nor present *Mireille* that season. Neither manager announced the opera but Mapleson presented it nine times.

⁵⁴ Ricketson, 37.

translation of the work, but not for the performance of the music drama. Since another impresario could present *Lohengrin* in a different translation, he felt it was not worthwhile to secure rights to a libretto alone.⁵⁵ His company rehearsed the piece three times that season, but Mapleson never produced it, the reason unclear.⁵⁶ When Gye wanted to present *Lohengrin* in 1872, he tried to commission Wagner to '[alter and add] to the Opera so that it could be registered in England & the right of representation obtained.'⁵⁷ Essentially, Gye hoped Wagner would create a 'new' version for London which he could protect. The composer refused.⁵⁸ *Lohengrin* finally arrived in London in 1875—performed at both houses in the Marchesi translation which Mapleson had chosen not to secure for himself.⁵⁹

A further effect of bilateral conventions was to situate the impresario in a complicated dilemma with regard to the importation of new works. On the one hand, these laws encouraged the impresario to import works from certain countries because they enabled him to take legal action against piracy. On the other hand, they deterred the impresario because, in protecting the foreign composer, these laws made works more difficult and expensive to purchase. Compounding this complication, each international agreement differed from British national copyright law and also from each other, so publishers and impresarios were usually confused about what entitlements were protected each time they entered into an agreement. Gye's diaries and other sources confirm that the process of negotiating for these rights involved a plethora of parties and considerations. In nearly every rights negotiation which Gye records, this complexity as well as the ambiguity and confusion surrounding the ever-shifting copyright laws in this pre-Berne environment caused misunderstandings, mistakes and hostilities. Slow

⁵⁵ *MM*, 88-89; Prospectus in *Times*, 14 March 1868.

⁵⁶ Santley, *Student and Singer*, 282.

⁵⁷ *GD*, 7 May 1872.

⁵⁸ See Dideriksen and Ringel, 16-17. In 1870, Gye pursued a similar course, successfully, with Fabio Campana's *Esmeralda* which had had its première in St. Petersburg (see chapter 6, page 268).

⁵⁹ *MM*, 88-89.

communication and dependence upon the written word contributed to these problems. It is worth examining briefly what these negotiations entailed.

Typically, discussions involved the impresario, the foreign publisher of the work, the prospective British publisher, the composer and, sometimes, the singers from the première. The diaries reveal that the foreign publisher enjoyed increasing dominance in these discussions, though only achieved clear control by the mid-1870s. Gye would tell Teresa Stoltz in 1874 'that Verdi was very wrong to sell the English rights of representation of his operas to an Editeur as they asked prices which excluded his works from being given there.'⁶⁰ Negotiating points among these parties included price, freedom of casting, number of rehearsals and the right to print and publish the libretto.⁶¹ Several negotiations in Gye's diaries suggest that the impresario would seek to establish either an annual sum covering all performances of the work or a sum per representation, with the right to renew the contract each year that the rights were available at gradually decreasing prices. The composer and foreign publisher were usually wary about signing away exclusive rights for so many years at a time, but on this point Gye remained adamant: he later explained to Ricordi, 'that as I can only play any opera a very few times in each season I can only recoup myself the large expenses of production during many seasons.'⁶² By the same logic, he would not pay very much for the exclusive right to an opera, generally not more than £250 for the first year, decreasing to £120 by the third and subsequent years. With libretti, Gye secured only the exclusive right to print and publish by paying a royalty to the publisher (domestic or foreign) who held the copyright. Beginning with *Roméo et Juliette* in 1867, he began to purchase the copyright himself at a price of £120. Issues of casting and rehearsals rarely obstructed negotiations—both parties usually agreed on the need for adequate singers and preparation—but they were

⁶⁰ GD, 29 December 1874.

⁶¹ Gye did not discuss the right to publish the music.

⁶² GD, 22 February 1876.

items which the impresario regularly ceded in exchange for concessions on more sensitive points such as price and right of renewal.

On the whole, Gye's business competence, his close and long-standing contacts with composers, publishers and agents, and his willingness to accommodate composers' requests as to casts and rehearsal time usually gave him an advantage over Mapleson. His record of bringing fourteen new works to London in the 1860s and 1870s as compared to Mapleson's eight supports this claim. Nevertheless, Mapleson's ability to resolve the financial and artistic uncertainties of his start-up venture by the end of 1862 made him a serious competitor to Gye for the exclusive rights to new operas. A series of protracted battles created problems, frustration and expense for both managers and ultimately may have led both to lose interest in pursuing exclusive rights by the end of the 1860s. The wrangles over two works especially provoked this perceptible change in attitude: Verdi's *La forza del destino* and Gounod's *Faust*.

In July 1862, four months before the première of *La forza del destino* in St. Petersburg, the English publisher Cramer, Beale & Co. purchased what it referred to as simply 'the copyright' from Ricordi and sought to get the opera performed in London. Gye reported, '[George] Wood, Beale's new partner came & asked me £150 for the right of performing Verdi's new opera *La Forza del destino* in England which they have bought of Ricordi of Milan - I said I would give it but it must include my right to print the words in my Opera books - he said he would speak to Beale about that, but he had no doubt he should arrange it.'⁶³ So the matter stood until that December when the English publisher admitted some confusion concerning the transfer of rights, complicating Gye's plans for the following season:

[Wood] said he feared they had no positive means of protecting the dramatic right of Verdi's new opera *La Forza del destino* under the Convention with Sardinia - but he was going to send [librettist Manfredo] Maggioni to Milan to see about it - also that Ricordi had asked £170 for the score - I said I thought they (Cramer & Co) were to give me a score

⁶³ GD, 18 July 1862.

for my £150 - he said so they had intended - He said Mapleson had given out that Mad. Verdi had sold him the right to perform - We agreed that the affair should stand over until Maggioni's return - but I fear there is some trickery going on.⁶⁴

Gye's suspicions were well-founded; he discovered a few days later that Mapleson had bypassed the British publisher and gone direct to the Italian source: '[Wood] showed me a letter from Ricordi of Milan saying that Mapleson had offered £250 for the score of Verdi's new opera *La Forza del Destino* - provided he let no one else have a score in England - Wood's object evidently was to know if I would pay this sum - but I told him his house had sold me what dramatic [right] there was & had told me they had bought it of Ricordi....I think they have been deceiving me.'⁶⁵

After the holidays, the heated discussions resumed. Apparently, Cramer and Beale misunderstood what they had originally purchased from Ricordi. They did have the 'dramatic rights'—the rights to the libretto—but Ricordi would not give them a score since he had 'sold a score to Arditi for Mapleson & undertook to sell no other for any London theatre.'⁶⁶ As Beale began to badger Ricordi for the music, Gye enlisted the singers' agent Achille Tamberlik—brother of Enrico, the creator of the role of Don Alvaro and a leading tenor in Gye's company—and Prosper Bagier, the newly appointed manager of the Théâtre Italien, to speak directly with Verdi about providing a score. None was forthcoming. A week before the season commenced, both Gye and Mapleson announced the opera in their prospectuses. Gye boasted the original cast but Mapleson used the opportunity to stake his claim to the opera in a public forum: 'The orchestral score and parts...with the right of representation, have, at a large outlay, been secured from the proprietor, Sig. Ricordi, of Milan who has undertaken not to supply any other theatre in England with a copy during the forthcoming season.' He also heralded the

⁶⁴ GD, 10 December 1862.

⁶⁵ GD, 15 December 1862.

⁶⁶ GD, 17 January 1863.

'immediate personal superintendence' of Verdi himself.⁶⁷ This was more than just characteristic posturing; a letter from Verdi to Ricordi written from Madrid two months earlier indicates the composer considered going to London for Mapleson's production.⁶⁸ Did this mean that Gye, still without the music, was out of luck? Not necessarily; Davison insinuated in *The Times* that Gye could always borrow the score from the manager of St. Petersburg or Barcelona—in effect, obtain it illegally. The manager demurred and did not produce it that season to his 'great loss and inconvenience.'⁶⁹ Mapleson also abandoned the opera, ostensibly because Verdi could not come to London as the rehearsal process for the Paris production of *Les Vêpres siciliennes* was delayed by several months.⁷⁰

The following season, both Gye and Mapleson announced *Forza* again. Wood still did not have the music for it and, after the season began, revealed to Gye that he could not maintain the copyright for the opera.⁷¹ Mapleson made the revisionary claim in his prospectus that he had not produced the opera the year before because Verdi wanted to modify the *dénouement* of the opera for London and that, having done so, he would now superintend the London performance.⁷² Ultimately, Mapleson did not present *Forza* until 1867, when he announced yet another reason why it was left unproduced for so long: he claimed he did not have a tenor equal to the musical requirements. He presented the

⁶⁷ Her Majesty's Theatre Prospectus, *Times*, 24 March 1863.

⁶⁸ Letter of 4 February 1863, Casa Ricordi, cited in Mary Jane Phillips-Matz, *Verdi: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 457. Phillips-Matz's reference to 'Lionel' Mapleson's production should read 'James Henry,' a small oversight in a beautifully detailed book. Lionel was the impresario's nephew, later to achieve fame as the man behind the first opera recordings, the Mapleson Cylinders.

⁶⁹ *Times*, 24 March, 13 April and 18 November 1863.

⁷⁰ Phillips-Matz, 459-61. Alternatively, he may not have produced it because he presented the popular *Faust* 21 times.

⁷¹ GD, 23 April 1864. Thomas Chappell had suggested 'there was no exclusive right in England for Verdi's Opera La Forza, it having been played first in Russia & there is no international [convention] with Russia (GD, 9 December 1863).

⁷² Her Majesty's Theatre Prospectus, *Times*, 12 March 1864. Documents suggest that Verdi did not consider changing the end of *Forza* until October 1863, after Mapleson's season had ended (Letter to Tito Ricordi, 3 October 1863, Casa Ricordi, cited in Phillips-Matz, 465).

original version three times and never did it again, but mounted the revised version in 1880. The opera did not appear at Covent Garden until 1931.

The *Forza* episode illustrates the complications over importing new operas which arose when two impresarios negotiated with a host of parties for rights which no one seemed fully to understand. That affair, however, was only a prelude to the more intense battle over the rights to *Faust*, the most frequently performed work at both houses in the 1860s and 1870s. This long-lasting debacle soured both impresarios to the importation of new works for the duration of their managements. Before the first performance of the work in 1859, Antoine de Choudens had paid Gounod £400 to publish *Faust* in France and Thomas Chappell paid £160 to publish it in England. For several years, Chappell tried to convince Gye to present it but by February 1863 the manager's original negative opinion of the work had changed little: 'the first 3 acts are effective but the last 3 very dull.'⁷³ Mapleson, on the other hand, had sent his conductor Luigi Arditi to Paris to hear it in the autumn of 1862 and received a favourable report. Chappell, who was by this time anxious for someone to present the opera, paid Mapleson £350 to produce it at Her Majesty's.⁷⁴ It was only after Mapleson announced *Faust* in his prospectus and Chappell told Gye that Mapleson had bought the music from Choudens for £200 that Gye became interested and bought the music from Choudens for the same price. It seems as if Gounod chose in this situation not to assign exclusive rights at all but to allow both houses to present his work.⁷⁵

⁷³ GD, 5 February 1863. The Choudens and Chappell figures come from Richard Northcott (*Gounod's Operas in London* [London: The Press Printers, 1918], 15), although Mapleson claims that Chappell paid only £40 for the rights (*MM*, 50).

⁷⁴ Chappell provides this information retrospectively on 13 December 1873, assumedly in a letter. He stated, 'English managers expected rather to be paid than to pay for producing a new opera,' but there is no evidence to support this generalization. In the case of *Faust*, Mapleson confirms that a transaction of this nature occurred, although he puts the figure at over £400 (*MM*, 50). Like Gye, Mapleson heard the work himself in February 1863 but believed it could achieve an immense success in London.

⁷⁵ GD, 11 and 21 April 1863 and *MM*, 51. Gye's diary contradicts the chronology created by Mapleson and passed down through Rosenthal and Steven Huebner who state that Gye did not consider presenting the work until Mapleson had successfully staged it (*MM*, 52; Rosenthal, *Two Centuries*, 141; Steven Huebner, *The Operas of Charles Gounod* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990], 55).

Gounod attended the first performance of his work in England, at Mapleson's company, although the composer did not superintend the production as Mapleson had claimed he would. He did attend the first rehearsal of *Faust* at the Royal Italian Opera two days later and composed the *romance* 'Si le bonheur' for Constance Nantier-Didiée (Siebel).⁷⁶ Two weeks before the first Covent Garden performance, however, Gounod threatened legal proceedings to claim payment for his *droits d'auteur*, which Gye believed was included in the sum paid to Choudens. Gounod was in this case influenced by his friend the gallery owner M. Gambart who was attuned to copyright law and also perhaps by the fact that Mapleson paid him £25 per performance for this right. Gounod backed away from starting proceedings, convinced that the laws were unclear on this point. Yet the issue of rights payments lingered, for Gambart offered Gounod £400 for the *exclusive* right to *Faust* in Britain for the first year and £600 for the entire remaining term that the rights existed.

Gye was not one to be shut out. This outside intervention prompted him to treat with Choudens and Gambart and, on the day of the Royal Italian Opera's first performance of it, Gye formally purchased 'the exclusive right of representation of Faust for 1863 1864 & 1865 for £250 & then at my option for the rest of his term for £600 - I agreeing to let Mapleson continue playing it for this year on certain terms.'⁷⁷ The whole affair upset Gounod greatly—allegedly he 'was half out of his mind and had been running about the streets last night'—because he feared Gye could stop Mapleson from playing the opera.⁷⁸ The work enjoyed a huge success that season in eleven performances at the Royal Italian Opera and 21 at Her Majesty's.

⁷⁶ Huebner, 120. According to Northcott, Gye paid Gounod £100 to supervise the production, a figure which does not appear in the Coutts ledgers (21).

⁷⁷ GD, 18 June to 5 July 1863. The Coutts ledgers show that Gye paid Choudens only £210, not £250. Northcott implies that the 'certain terms' for Mapleson's presentations were that Gye would receive the £25 per performance which Mapleson paid Gounod. According to Choudens, Mapleson was not pleased with this new development.

⁷⁸ GD, 2 July 1863.

That autumn, Gye did prevent Pyne and Harrison from performing *Faust* in English because he wanted it to retain a special attraction for his next Italian season. Nevertheless, no publisher or impresario seemed to know for certain what rights the international convention between England and France guaranteed, let alone which impresario possessed them. In December, Chappell told Gye that he thought 'that the music of Faust had been played so often in England before the opera had been brought out & before Gounod's sale to me that no right could be maintained.'⁷⁹ The following month, although Gye extended his 'exclusive right' to the opera for 1864, Mapleson gave a special winter season of 21 *Faust* performances in English. In 1865, Gye paid Gounod £600 for the exclusive rights to *Faust* for the next 25 years, as they had agreed. To Gye's great frustration, his rival continued to present the opera in the Italian seasons as well—twelve times in 1864 and twice in 1865— without paying for the performances.⁸⁰ In the beginning of the 1866 season, therefore, Gye brought a case to court in an attempt to win punitive damages but also to establish a precedent to deter infringements of rights in the future. He sued Mapleson for £5,000 damages, specifying £25 for each of 94 performances in England between 1863 and April 1866 plus a sum representing the box-office loss those performances provoked.⁸¹ As the case progressed, however, Gye's lawyer Tamplin 'said he doubted if the opera had been properly registered - this is the first I heard of this.'⁸² The court case revealed that Chappell had indeed registered the opera at Stationer's Hall three days after the three-month allowance following the Paris première of *Faust* in 1859; because of this error, Gounod had no rights to the opera in

⁷⁹ GD, 9 December 1863. According to Rosenthal, selections from *Faust* had been played at the Canterbury Music Hall in Westminster Bridge Road before the first staged performances in London (*MM*, 50). Chappell surely means that it had been played so frequently by Mapleson before Gye brought out the opera.

⁸⁰ The reason Mapleson performed it only twice in 1865 was not because he finally recognized Gye's rights; rather, his Faust, Giuglini, became mortally ill during the season and his Mephistopheles, Gassier, signed with Gye. In the autumn season, Mapleson performed the opera four times.

⁸¹ Northcott, 19. *Gye v. Mapleson* was tried in the Queen's Bench, for which records are limited in the Public Record Office. One passing reference (KB/125/281) reveals that Gounod also brought an action against Mapleson.

⁸² 5 November 1866. Gye blamed his lawyer Tamplin for this negligence.

England, *Faust* had always been part of the public domain and Gye had to drop his suit against Mapleson.⁸³ In monetary terms, Gye's loss from this error was the £1,100 he had paid for the rights to *Faust* plus his and Mapleson's expenses for the court case; according to Chappell, the lack of exclusive rights incurred box office losses between £5,000 and £10,000.⁸⁴

Even after the court case, the *Faust* affair cast a long shadow and complicated the rights to perform Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*. Gye purchased those rights in 1867 when the opera appeared in Paris, just after the *Faust* suit fell apart. The following year, Gye began to press Gounod to return the money he had paid for the *Faust* performance rights so many years earlier. Apparently, Gye took this outstanding debt as license to skip a *Roméo* payment altogether—which duly prompted Gounod to withdraw Gye's right to perform it.⁸⁵ As late as 1872, Gye obsessed about his loss over *Faust* and filed an action against Gounod. The composer returned £300 which failed to satisfy the impresario. On a trip to Paris later that year, Gye seems to have settled with Gounod regarding *Faust* but not *Roméo*, which did not reappear in England until 1875; the travel diary for that year is missing, so the only clue to this resolution is a brief reference in his main journal.⁸⁶

The drama of the *Faust* affair, coming directly after the comparatively minor disagreement over *La forza del destino* in 1863, clearly affected both Mapleson and Gye's attitudes towards negotiating for new operas from the mid-1860s onwards. Mapleson did not import another new opera until *Carmen* in 1878, and provided instead revivals and works in the public domain in the guise of novelty.⁸⁷ He referred obliquely

⁸³ Huebner, 55. Gye wrote, 'the national copyright act gave 3 lunar months and not 3 calendar months for the registration at Stationers Hall after the first publication or performance in France' (GD, 27 May 1867).

⁸⁴ GD, 18 January 1872. Gounod had also calculated a personal loss of £10,000 from this error (Huebner, 55-56).

⁸⁵ GD, 7 March 1869.

⁸⁶ GD, 29 May 1872.

⁸⁷ This does not include the new works produced in his two seasons with Gye.

to this decision to switch programming policies in his prospectus of 1867, after the *Faust* imbroglio subsided:

In announcing the list of operas to be performed this season, Mr. Mapleson believes that, with the large number of lyric works by the greatest composers yet remaining, in some cases comparatively, and in others entirely unknown to the English public, it is unnecessary to possess the exclusive right of any particular work, but that by the production of operas which may invite competition, he will serve the true interests of art, as well as enrich his repertoire.⁸⁸

His interest in improving the tastes of the general public notwithstanding, Mapleson's decision to revive forgotten classical works was more a question of new works becoming too prohibitively difficult to secure. Gye's response to the turn of events was somewhat different: he became more adamant than before about presenting only new works for which he could secure exclusive rights. Moreover, he gradually abandoned novelty as a method to create interest for his opera seasons in favour of the rotation of top stars in a greater number of familiar works, a tactic to be explored more fully in later chapters.

Competitive Programming and Rehearsals

The *Faust* and *Forza* episodes illustrate that each manager responded directly to the other's enterprise. This dynamic constituted one of the most prominent characteristics of the Gye-Mapleson rivalry. In other cases, the success of a particular work at one house would prompt the rival to follow suit. Gye's decision to mount *Le nozze di Figaro* in 1864, a work he had neglected for fifteen years, came only after Mapleson presented it to widespread critical and public acclaim during the previous two seasons.⁸⁹ Similarly, after the fire of 1856, Gye recreated productions for *Die Zauberflöte* and *Der Freischütz* for the new opera house only after he joined with Mapleson's classically-oriented company;

⁸⁸ *Times*, 30 March 1867.

⁸⁹ As will be examined shortly, rehearsal difficulties delayed its appearance until 1866.

after the union was dissolved, Gye presented these works regularly. More frequently, the two impresarios tried to pre-empt each other by being the first to present a revival or a new work in the public domain—as Arditi put it, 'to score over "the opposition shop" and be "first in the field."' ⁹⁰ In 1865, for example, both managers announced *Linda di Chamounix* in their prospectuses, a work not performed in London for fourteen years. Although Gye was the first to announce rehearsals for it, Mapleson produced it earlier as a vehicle for his new star Ilma di Murska, who met with great success. Gye presented it two weeks later with Patti but his diaries reveal that box-office receipts for two of three performances were terribly low. The work became a staple for Mapleson's company but Gye's did not attempt it again for seven years.⁹¹

A first performance was not in itself sufficient for one of the two institutions to lay claim to a work. Mapleson's hurried preparation of *Ballo* in 1861, a move which scuttled Gye's intention to introduce it to London, met with criticism while Gye's performance several weeks later was praised.⁹² A successful presentation of a new work, however, could set a high standard and deter the rival impresario from presenting it altogether. Such was the case with Otto Nicolai's *Die Lustigen Weiber von Windsor*. Encouraged by the opera's many years of success in Germany, both managers announced it in their prospectuses in 1864. Mapleson's production ranked among his most accomplished spectacles. Gye's plans were ruined. *The Times* intoned:

That the Italian version of Otto Nicolai's comic opera, *Die Lustigen Weiber von Windsor* (promised) should have been abandoned, may be laid to the account of its successful production elsewhere, and to a conviction that—unlike M. Gounod's *Faust*—it doesn't have extraordinary

⁹⁰ Arditi, 96.

⁹¹ *Times*, 16 and 29 May 1865 and GD, 6 and 10 June 1865. The work did appear at the Royal Italian Opera in the first year of coalition (1869) but featured Mapleson's singers.

⁹² *Times*, 17 and 28 June 1865.

attractions as to insure good houses at two large establishments simultaneously.⁹³

Such cross-institutional influence also existed with concert series, but to a lesser extent. Mapleson's classical revival in the mid-1860s provided a successful model for Mellon's similarly themed Promenade concerts in 1866.⁹⁴ However, the clear dynamic between the two opera houses by which one manager gauged the other's repertoire and then decided either to mount a work—as a strategic, pre-emptive tool—or to forego its production, did not exist across other musical institutions to the same degree.

Given the importance of being first to present a new opera and the financial necessity to present it as many times as possible to recoup investment, it was imperative that rehearsals progress smoothly. What limited evidence concerning rehearsals exists suggests that they did not. The timing and structure of the London season as well as the artistic hierarchy of the institution introduced problems to the preparation of new operas. Rehearsals for a new opera generally lasted between two and three weeks at each theatre.⁹⁵ This amount of rehearsal matched that of Italian houses but was less than that of French institutions.⁹⁶ Revivals of standard works were easier to prepare, especially because the same principal singers assumed the same roles from season to season. Thus for the opening night of 1867, *Norma* required only one rehearsal and, a month later, the same was the case for *Il barbiere*.⁹⁷ When Costa called four piano rehearsals and one

⁹³ *Times*, 1 August 1864.

⁹⁴ *Times*, 3 September 1866.

⁹⁵ George Grove noted that rehearsals sometimes extended from six to eight weeks, but the diaries and *Times* do not suggest this to be the case (*Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 3:97-8).

⁹⁶ For rehearsal time in London, one needs to depend upon Gye's haphazard notation of first rehearsal dates in the diaries and advertisements in *The Times* announcing that rehearsals for a work were underway. In 1866, for example, Her Majesty's announced on 14 April that Gluck's *Iphigenie in Tauride* was in rehearsal and it was produced 8 May, even though 3 May was originally set as the first night. Likewise, a notice for *Dinorah* rehearsals appeared 10 May and the first performance, scheduled for 22 May occurred 26 May. *Ernani* rehearsals lasted from 25 June until 10 July. For Italy and France, see 'Rehearsal,' *New Grove Opera*, 3:25.

⁹⁷ GD, 1 April to 4 May 1867.

dress rehearsal with orchestra for a revival of the perennial *Don Pasquale*, Patti and the other singers complained that it was too much and Gye agreed.⁹⁸

The number of days needed to prepare a new work may not have been onerous, but the term for presenting one was narrowly prescribed, at least at the Royal Italian Opera. Since the London season occupied the period of April until August, it overlapped in part with those of continental theatres and star singers therefore did not arrive in London until mid-May. Even if rehearsals began as soon as these singers arrived, the earliest the first new work of the season could appear was the beginning of June. Usually, the first novelty appeared later than that, since the stars would first prepare the works for which they were best known. Any complications with the rehearsal process could delay a first performance until well into July, and threaten the prospect of multiple performances and a handsome financial return. The new works which appeared at the Royal Italian Opera between 1861 and 1867—*Ballo, Alessandro Stradella, Faust, Africaine, Crispino e la comare, Don Carlos* and *Roméo*—all appeared in June or July. Mapleson's company suffered less from the late arrival of singers since his biggest stars stayed with him year round. He was therefore more capable of presenting a work early in the season, which he did in the cases of *Niccolò de' Lapi, Die Lustigen Weiber, Iphigénie en Tauride, Der Freischütz* and *I Lombardi*. Nevertheless, his company tended to suffer from longer delay's than Gye's company in the rehearsal process; therefore, many works—*Faust, Mireille, Oberon, Fidelio, Médée, Die Entführung aus dem Serail, Ernani, Forza*—did not appear until very late in the season. The narrow band for producing new operas naturally limited the number of genuinely new works an impresario would attempt in a season. Gye wrote in his 1867 prospectus, featuring *Don Carlos* and *Roméo*, 'It is believed that the production of two entirely new works in the one short season of a London Italian Opera is without precedent.'⁹⁹ Given this predicament, the impresario benefited more from presenting a new work which had already been rehearsed with the

⁹⁸ GD, 9 July 1863.

⁹⁹ *Times*, 27 March 1867.

same cast and presented elsewhere; when Anton Rubinstein's agent proposed the Royal Italian Opera for the world première of *Nero*, Gye responded: 'that it would be advisable for it to be given somewhere before R.I.O. as our season was so short we should scarcely have time to put a perfectly new work on the stage for the first time.'¹⁰⁰

Furthermore, delays with any one new production reduced the amount of time available to prepare another. Thus, at the Royal Italian Opera in 1862, complications with the revival of *Masaniello* meant that it did not appear until 7 August, *The Times* noting that 'it can have little effect on the present season, now so nearly coming to a close.'¹⁰¹ This delay dashed Gye's hope to present Patti in *La fille du régiment* that season. He announced in the papers,

The preparation of the grand opera of *Masaniello* (being for the first time of its performance at the new theatre) having occupied so much more time than was originally anticipated, and the rehearsals having been unavoidably so much prolonged, it has been found impossible to complete the arrangements for giving the opera of *La Figlia del Reggimento*, which will therefore be postponed until next season.¹⁰²

With new works generally presented only a few times at the end of a season or not at all, the impresario usually announced them as novelties in the following seasons' prospectus; in 1866, for example, Gye explained that since only four performances of *L'africaine* were given the previous year, 'it may, therefore, be regarded almost as a new opera for the present Italian season.'¹⁰³ This tactic, however, was a fairly transparent palliative to make up for the impresario's failure to announce genuine novelty.

Clearly, a series of structural difficulties impaired the preparation of a new work. The timing of the London season in relation to continental theatres and cyclical patterns

¹⁰⁰ GD, 22 January 1877.

¹⁰¹ *Times*, 8 August 1862. Complications arose because Costa and the band had outside engagements during the month of July.

¹⁰² *Times*, 9 August 1862.

¹⁰³ *Times*, 19 March 1866.

of audience attendance within London limited the amount of time in which to rehearse. Delays in the rehearsal process further jeopardized the impresario's ability to fulfill the promises made in his prospectus. These complications hurt him in several ways: changing particular performances angered the subscribers and incurred financial loss; fewer performances of a new work also involved loss of potential income; and, in some cases, the work had to be abandoned altogether.

There were several reasons for these delays. In some cases, they were the result of poor planning. In 1864, Mapleson delayed the first performance of *Falstaff* by a week because, as part of his attempt to bolster income from ancillary concerts, he had allowed his orchestra and principal singers to perform several times in Stratford near the end of the rehearsal schedule.¹⁰⁴ Delays of this nature, however, were minor affairs. More frequently, singers' whims and machinations threatened to and in some cases succeeded in jeopardizing the performance of a new opera. Although contracts required singers to follow the standard rules of the theatre with regard to rehearsals, some top singers attended rehearsals only intermittently and some learned music slowly.¹⁰⁵ In 1867, for example, shortly before *Roméo* was to open, Costa complained that Mario did not know his part even though Gye had sent him the music in Paris seven weeks before. Costa told Gye the opening would have to be postponed to mid-July; even by the first performance, Mario 'did not know his part and was not at all up to the mark.'¹⁰⁶ Sometimes the singers refused to attend rehearsals altogether. Reasons varied from genuine indisposition to a more sinister desire to injure another singer's chances of success. After skipping a number of rehearsals, for a revival of *Fra Diavolo* in 1865, for example, Mario approached Gye:

¹⁰⁴ *Times*, 27 April 1864.

¹⁰⁵ Stipulations regarding rehearsal attendance appear in Mapleson's contract with George Bentham, *Times*, 27 November 1871, and Gye's contract with Mario, Mario Correspondence, ROHA. See also the house rules for Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, reproduced in Beale, *Impresario*, 79-85.

¹⁰⁶ GD, 15 June to 11 July 1867. Mario asked to be excused from the second performance two hours before he was to take the stage, but Gye refused and circulated a printed apology instead. Given his problems with *Roméo*, it is ironic that one of the most familiar images of the great tenor is the photograph of the balcony scene with Patti.

He begged me as a great favor to excuse him [from singing] the part in Fra Diavolo as said he 'cette musique me p^c rte toujours malheur' - he said 'if you force me I must of course do it but I beg of you to excuse me' - I said as he put it in that way I could not refuse his request but then advised him for his own sake as well as for mine to do the part-- reminding him how often it had been announced &c - he however persisted in declining it - He looked miserably unhappy - I afterwards heard that Grisi was jealous of Lucca & tried to injure me all she could & had been persuading Mario not to do the part & that they had had a great row - I found out also that the Strakosch-Adelina Patti party had also been intriguing that Mario should not sing the part in order to prevent Lucca having another success!!¹⁰⁷

In such a situation, the impresario had little ability to force star singers to attend rehearsals, save to threaten embarrassing them with public disclosure of the reason for their non-attendance.¹⁰⁸

An even more severe problem for Gye was Costa's extreme lack of cooperation with rehearsing new productions. His power at the Royal Italian Opera was formidable, since its establishment in 1847 depended upon his defection from Her Majesty's Theatre. Gye personally benefited from Costa's presence; his assistance in the 'Commonwealth' management of 1849-50 helped save the theatre from closure during its financially unstable infancy and smoothed Gye's transition to sole manager of the Opera. As the most noted opera conductor in England, Costa also raised the institution to a level of musical excellence unmatched in London. His musical direction alone assured Gye of attracting a considerable number of subscribers. Henry Jarrett wrote to Davison years later, 'with Costa there would be a small subscription, without scarcely any [star singer]. I don't know of any such person or "star" except Patti and Nilsson.'¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ GD, 23 June 1865.

¹⁰⁸ GD, 17 May 1864.

¹⁰⁹ Jarrett letter to Davison, 18 February 1871, fol. 87 of Davison Collection, British Library. See also Arditi, 165.

The archives of the Royal Opera House include a valuable collection of correspondence between Gye and Costa from the 1850s and 1860s and a fascinating series of signed and unsigned contracts from different stages of their relationship, all of which afford insight into the conductor's working practices.¹¹⁰ The contract of 1858 (Appendix C) remained relatively unchanged until the 1864 season and included several clauses relevant to Costa's superintendence of the company's musical resources and the rehearsal process. Article 2 specified that Costa could perform at other venues on all but opera evenings (Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday), important to the conductor who was heavily involved with the Philharmonic Society, Sacred Harmonic Society and Handel Festivals; it was the refusal of this right which had provoked Costa's animosity towards Lumley.

At the Royal Italian Opera, Gye alone chose the repertoire each season. A letter from Gye to Costa in 1858 suggests that the manager was open to the conductor's suggestion of new works but, in practice, Costa seemed to play little role in devising the programme; in 1865, three days after Gye had published the season prospectus, 'Costa came and for a wonder made no unpleasant remarks about the prospectus of the season,' a remark which suggests that the conductor usually played no part in developing the prospectus, but only reacted to it.¹¹¹ A conversation between Gye and the Prince of Wales after the Gye-Costa rift of 1869 suggests further that Gye fully expected his conductor to advise him about new works: 'I told him except as chef d'orchestre how useless Costa had been to the theatre-- & what an impediment &c that no opera, during the whole 20 years that I have had the theatre, was ever done at Costa's recommendation.'¹¹² Even if Costa did not recommend any operas, article 5 of the contract effectively gave Costa complete veto power over all new operas: he was not

¹¹⁰ Transcriptions prepared by Elizabeth Forbes in *About the House 2* (May 1968) include extracts from some of the letters, but no other known use has been made of their content and none made of the contracts.

¹¹¹ GD, 21 March 1865. See also Gye's letters to Costa 15 May, 10 and 15 June 1868.

¹¹² GD, 22 June 1869.

'obliged' to rehearse or conduct them and, of course, Gye did not have any other conductor to do so. It is unclear what prompted the curious exemption of Spohr and Meyerbeer; both composers had been closely involved with performances of their works in London and it is possible that Costa resented sharing his office in any way.¹¹³ Their names were deleted from this article upon their deaths in 1859 and 1864 respectively. Article 10 of the contract further clarified that Gye scheduled performances as the season progressed, and instructed Costa which works he would perform with six weeks' notice for new works and one week for revivals. Two other clauses, 9 and 11, also related to rehearsals: whereas Gye had complete authority over the engagement of singers, Costa could arrange the engagements of the orchestra and chorus.

These specifications for the preparation of new works led to frequent clashes between manager and conductor in the early 1860s. From Gye's perspective, 'Costa came & made all sorts of difficulties about rehearsals-- he always finds them difficult and never suggests a remedy.'¹¹⁴ With the expansion of the musical public and the subsequent explosion of summer concert series, greater demands were made on the orchestra's time. Costa and his orchestra stood to make extra money by playing in concerts at Exeter Hall and the Crystal Palace. At the same time, Gye began to schedule a greater number of performances—five nights per week by 1864—in order to meet this demand and to make more money from his theatre. Costa resented Gye's new demands and, years later, would assail them:

I think it is to be regretted for every reason that you did not previously communicate with me on the practical working, in regard to matters within the functions I have for many years exercised. Had you done so, I should have told you as I now do, that it is beyond human endurance for the same orchestra and chorus to go through the ordeal of a public performance every night, with the rehearsals, which are, as you know,

¹¹³ Spohr, for example, prepared recitatives, rehearsed and conducted the première of his *Faust* in 1852 (GD, 18 January 1852; Rosenthal, 153).

¹¹⁴ GD, 31 March 1864. Despite his reputation as a taskmaster, Costa may not have been as strict a disciplinarian as is claimed so often. Musgrave mentions that for Crystal Palace concerts, Costa often missed rehearsals and allowed his leader to conduct (47).

necessarily incidental to the performances, and this alone is sufficient to demonstrate the impracticability of your projected arrangements.¹¹⁵

The notoriously short-tempered conductor never voiced this complaint so clearly in the early 1860s, when Gye started to expand opera activities. Sometimes Gye would grudgingly agree to let Costa miss a rehearsal for other purposes: 'I have this week put myself to great inconvenience & loss in order to allow Costa, & the band & chorus to rehearse & play the music at the Exhibition [of 1862] & have had no rehearsals, consequently I had no operas rehearsed for either Mario or Patti to sing whose engagement began yesterday - I certainly lose by this 6 or 8 hundred pounds!'¹¹⁶ More typically, scheduling conflicts produced ugly confrontations. In 1868, to cite a particularly tempestuous example, Patti was too ill to sing Juliette one evening and Gye sent for her understudy Helen Lemmens-Sherrington, who had had the part for a year but not a single rehearsal: 'Costa came & I said it was a shameful thing after all I had said to him about the doublures being ready to sing that Sherrington had had no rehearsal-- he said there had been no time!! This lead to words when he said "You say I do wrong-- I do wrong? I cannot do wrong! That's an impertinence to say I do wrong! If you don't want me I'll go."¹¹⁷

The 1865 season serves as an excellent focus to illustrate several different ways in which Costa's personal preferences and sometimes willful behaviour hindered the preparation of new operas over the course of a season. Gye announced several novelties in his prospectus: *Linda di Chamounix*, *Fra Diavolo*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Le nozze di Figaro* and *L'africaine*.¹¹⁸ In the case of *L'africaine*, reports and the impresario's own

¹¹⁵ Costa letter to Gye, 27 January 1869, Item 28 in MC Papers. See Ardit, 76 for a concurring opinion about this difficulty.

¹¹⁶ GD, 1 May 1862.

¹¹⁷ GD, 14 July 1868.

¹¹⁸ *Times*, 18 March 1865. He also announced *L'étoile du Nord* as a novelty because it was only presented four times the previous season; but given the definition of novelty followed in this study, it does not qualify.

observations suggest that Costa's personal distaste for the work led him to neglect its adequate rehearsal. Many critics more impartial than Gye have observed that Costa had a clear bias towards Italian opera. Shaw wrote, 'The master who receives the fullest justice from Sir Michael is Rossini, to whose music he is wedded by taste and nationality. The works of the great Germans he attacks conscientiously, but without the keen relish which he exhibits when his own school is the subject of exposition.'¹¹⁹ Bennett added, 'Passionately loving Rossini, and the masters of his own country, as was natural, he hated with no less intensity some other composers who shocked his sense of the true in art.'¹²⁰ Gye's diaries suggest that Costa disliked the works of Meyerbeer in particular, though it is not clear if this was on personal or aesthetic grounds. Since Meyerbeer's death the previous year, Costa had obstructed the preparations for *L'étoile du Nord* in 1864 and *Le prophète* in 1865. As early as January 1865, he began to create problems for *L'africaine* by resisting Gye's request to prepare cuts and alterations. As of 8 June, there had been little progress; Gye recorded, 'Harris told me Costa was still trying to get out of doing the Africaine-- he had not yet given out the parts.' *The Times* reported on 13 June that rehearsals were underway; behind the scenes, however, Costa allowed some of the singers to learn the music before he made the cuts to it, leading Wachtel to tell Gye 'he was sure Costa did not want the opera to be given.'¹²¹ In mid-July, as the season end approached, Gye

asked Costa when he thought we could give the Africaine - he was as usual nasty about [it] & said Lucca had not been to rehearsal today & he could not tell - It is entirely his own fault it is so late for he has tried every means in his power to prevent it being given at all & because he has not succeeded in that now puts it off as late as possible.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Shaw, 1 August 1877, in Laurence, *Shaw's Music*, 1:170.

¹²⁰ Bennett, 52.

¹²¹ GD, 30 June 1865.

¹²² GD, 11 July 1865.

At other times, Costa's vengeful and sensitive disposition led to brazen responses, often at the expense of rehearsals. An argument with a singer, for example, would lead him to leave a rehearsal or to reschedule one entirely:

Costa had ordered a rehearsal of the *Africaine* instead of *Fra Diavolo* & when I asked him the reason he said because he had called a rehearsal [of *Fra Diavolo*] yesterday & Mario had not come & had not written him an apology so 'he should not call any more'!! - I told him that was an affair between him & Mario & I could not have the Opera sacrificed for such a thing as I was determined it should be given.¹²³

Finally, as alluded to before, Costa would skip rehearsals altogether in order to fulfill other commitments; within the first month of the 1865 season, Costa missed four rehearsals. Gye attempted to alleviate the pressure on Costa that season: 'I begged of [Costa] if he had too much work as he said he had to have another conductor under him - I said he might engage who he liked & I would pay them-- but this did not suit him - he likes me to ask favors of him.'¹²⁴ Ultimately, *L'africaine* could not appear until the last week of the season, limiting Gye to four performances only. The papers reported that the work received only three rehearsals.¹²⁵ Two of the remaining novelties, *Fra Diavolo* and *Le nozze di Figaro*, were deferred entirely to the subsequent season.¹²⁶

¹²³ GD, 16 June 1865.

¹²⁴ GD, 12 May 1865. After the 1866 season presented similar difficulties, Gye engaged another conductor to assist with rehearsals. This development and other moves to tighten control over his company precipitated a conflict which ultimately led to Costa's resignation at the time of the Gye-Mapleson coalition.

¹²⁵ *Times*, 24 July 1865. Considering that the work had been in preparation for so long, the 'three rehearsals' undoubtedly refer to full stage rehearsals with orchestra; for a work of *L'africaine's* complexity, this still would have been low.

¹²⁶ *Le nozze di Figaro* had already been rehearsed at least eight times in 1864 (GD, 23 June 66).

Box Office

The foregoing discussion demonstrates that a number of conditions deterred the impresarios from importing new works to London from the late 1850s onwards. He had to see the opera on the Continent and believe the opera would appeal to the London public. He then had to negotiate for the exclusive performance rights to the opera and arrange necessary alterations for a London performance. Furthermore, rehearsals had to proceed without a hitch for a performance to occur. Once all these minimum requirements for producing a new opera were fulfilled, the question of repeat performances and future revivals was based upon a different criterion: the work needed to perform well at the box office.

Although the Gye diaries and Coutts ledgers offer a tantalizing glimpse into the financial success of individual operas, the information falls just short of enabling comprehensive analysis. In the Coutts ledgers, for example, the bankers record the date of Gye's deposits but do not clarify whether a receipt is box-office income or money paid to Gye for other reasons. Likewise, it is impossible to correlate these figures with particular performances because patterns of deposit vary. Gye's scattered comments in his diaries, particularly the later ones, regarding box-office success are much more helpful but still do not allow for thorough analysis. Sometimes, he gives only terse reactions such as 'a wretched house' or 'a capital house' but frequently provides a figure as well; however, sample sizes (up to 43 performances in a season, but usually fewer) are not large enough to yield statistically significant results. Also, these figures reflect only the money taken at the box office, without accounting for the many theatregoers who would have already purchased admission to the opera as part of a subscription. Since Tuesdays and Saturdays, the traditional subscription nights, hosted a greater number of subscribers than other evenings, box-office figures for those nights are artificially low. Bearing these

discrepancies in mind, one can still use these figures to achieve a rough picture of the relative box-office appeal of different works.¹²⁷

As one would expect, French *grand opéra* performed extremely well at the box office. In 1861, for example, the average box-office income for all Italian works was £374; for *Le prophète*, however, it was £536 and two performances of *Guillaume Tell* averaged £640. Meyerbeer and Verdi's works were particularly popular in these decades. In the early 1870s, used here simply because they have the greatest number of box-office figures available, *L'étoile du Nord* and *Dinorah* consistently made the most money—near £600 at a time when season averages were just over £400. Gye seems to have operated with the assumption that his investment in spectacular productions, as operas in the grand style necessitated, would succeed in attracting a large public. After a poorly attended performance of *Don Carlos*, for example, he expressed surprise and dismay: '£76 and to an opera done in such a manner as this!'¹²⁸ An article in *The Illustrated London News* suggested that operas from the classical repertoire, which Mapleson gave, did not have a reputation for commercial success: 'Her Majesty's Theatre has the advantage in bringing out great works that are little known....That the production of works of this kind is not always a profitable speculation is all the more honourable to the manager who is willing to sacrifice profit to the gratification of the lovers of high and classical art.'¹²⁹

In any given season, it appears as if Gye would withdraw an opera from the schedule if it failed to attract. In 1869, for example, *Norma* and *Robert le diable* played to empty houses and were not revived for the remainder of the season, the latter work not for the next four seasons. After *La gazza ladra* failed in 1863 with no less an interpreter than Patti, Gye shelved it for six years. Even the mighty *Faust* was not immune to temporary

¹²⁷ This is possible because many of the discrepancies negate each other when one evaluates several figures at a time. For example, if there are three figures for each of two operas, each set might include two subscription nights and one non-subscription night, thereby creating a comparable basis for comparison. It is important to bear in mind that other variables influenced box-office success; these included number of representations in a season, other operas or events that day or week, and the weather. Gye was acutely aware of all these factors and often looked to attribute box-office failure to such causes.

¹²⁸ GD, 2 April 1868.

¹²⁹ *Illustrated London News*, 9 June 1866.

lapses: in 1866, after *Faust* had had four successive poor houses, Gye wrote 'Faust wants a rest!'¹³⁰ Developing this point one step further, box-office analysis suggests that Gye's increasing reluctance to stage new operas from the mid-1860s onwards may have been a reaction to the poor receipts of new works not written by major composers and of other works that were. Nearly every year between 1867 and 1874 Gye produced a new opera which did not meet with financial success. In 1867 *Don Carlos* played to the worst houses of the season and the following year *Le domino noir* had a house of £47—a revival two years later only made £73. Audiences flocked out of the first performance of *Don Bucefalo* (Cagnoni), rendering it box office poison, and in 1870 'the Press had so cut up [Campana's *Esmeralda*] that it produced nothing.' *Medea* (Cherubini) averaged £105 and *Le astuzie femminili* (Cimarosa) in 1871 averaged only £81. Gye's frustration with this trend was palpable: 'Second night of *Il Guarany* - the Opera was shortened & went very well but requires more cutting - only £69 in the house!-- so much for new operas.'¹³¹ Although some of these performances pleased Gye and the critics, a new and unproven work that did not succeed at the box office was usually not given another chance.¹³²

¹³⁰ GD, 4 June 1866.

¹³¹ GD, 16 July 1872. For the other box-office figures, see GD, 18 June, 4 and 24 July 1867 (*Don Carlos*); 21 July 1868 and 4 July 1870 (*Le domino noir*); 29 May 1869 and *Times*, 31 May 1869 (*Don Bucefalo*); 23 and 27 June 1870 (*Esmeralda*); 30 April and 3 May 1870 (*Medea*); and 15 and 18 July 1871 (*Le astuzie femminili*).

¹³² The exceptions to this were works by well-established composers. Thus, he brought back *Don Carlos* and *Le domino noir* for additional seasons despite poor receptions.

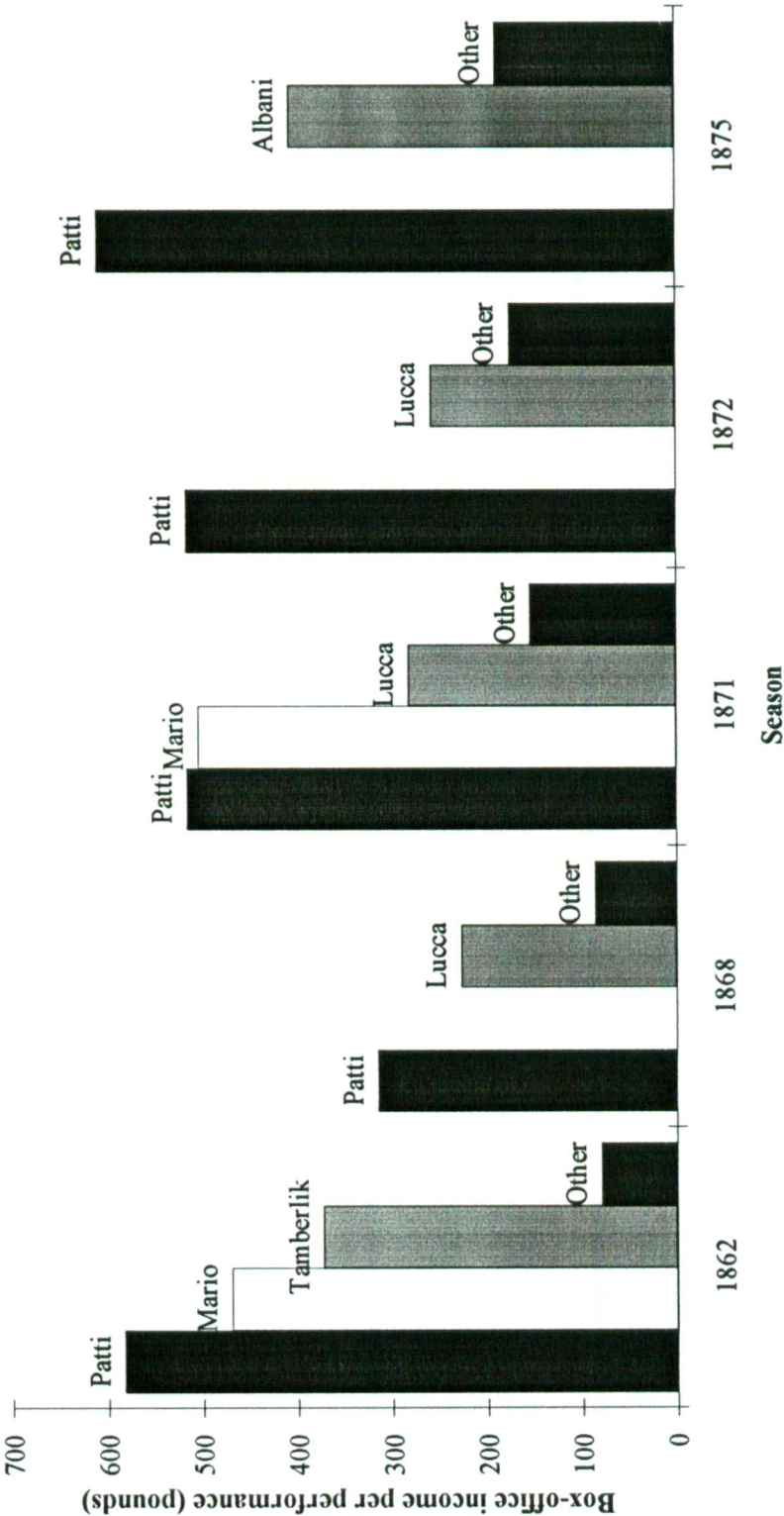
Chapter 5

Singers and Schedules

Comparisons of box-office figures for specific operas are interesting, but it may be misleading to assign too much importance to repertoire as an attraction. Upon closer inspection, one might conjecture that the opera performed was irrelevant to the level of theatre attendance; what counted was who sang it. To revisit an example from the previous chapter, while it is fair to propose that *L'étoile du Nord* and *Dinorah* were consistently among the most popular works each season, it is perhaps more accurate to assert that these works succeeded because Patti appeared in them. A graphic comparison of box-office income for performances featuring specific singers demonstrates this connection powerfully (table 9). In 1862, for example, the average income for a Patti night was £583, a Mario night—often including Patti—was £470, and a Tamberlik night £373; when none of these stars sang, there was a box office of only £80. The data available for 1871 yield similar results. The 1872 season, dominated by Patti and Lucca, and the 1875 season, featuring Patti and Albani, also demonstrate a direct relationship between singer and box office. In 1872, Patti nights (£517) doubled the income of Lucca nights (£258). Performances in which neither star sang only attracted £175. In 1875, Patti nights averaged £610 while Albani nights averaged £407. When neither *prima donna* sang, box office averaged £189.

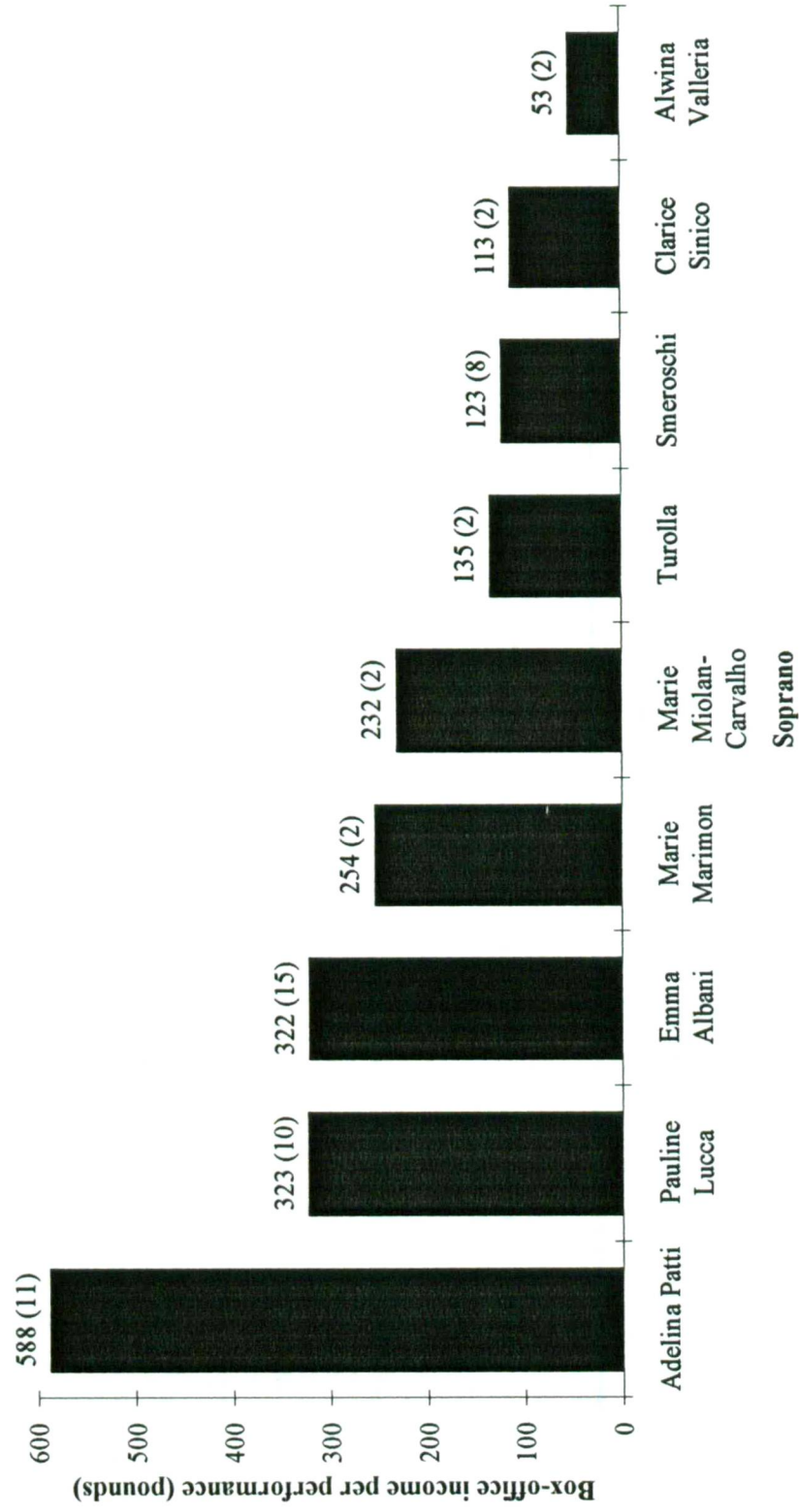
An income comparison for different casts appearing in the same opera lends further support to the claim that the opera performed did not contribute to financial success as much as the singer who interpreted it. In 1871, for example, *Les Huguenots* with Lucca and the tenor Pietro Mongini took in less than £200 and then £383, but later that season there was a box of £746 when Patti and Mario appeared in the opera. *La favorita* with Mongini attracted £123 but two weeks later with Mario singing the part of Fernando, the opera earned £336. Table 10 shows that income varied directly with the stature of the

Table 9: Box-Office income for star singers



Source: Author's analysis based on figures in Gye diaries

Table 10: Faust box-office income for Royal Italian Opera sopranos, 1871-82



Source: Northcott Collection, British Library; author's analysis.

Note: Number of performances for each soprano given in brackets.

soprano within the company. A document inserted into the Northcott Collection of opera libretti in the British Library further illustrates this point. Three folios list the soprano, tenor and box-office income for every performance of *Faust* at the Royal Italian Opera from 1871 until 1882. A series of analyses suggests that the most direct determinant of revenue was the star soprano.¹

Given the strong correlation in the data, it is necessary to explore the proposition that the operatic repertoire in mid-nineteenth-century London was not so much a lever of artistic policy as it was a vehicle for showing off star singers, the work presented almost incidental to the operatic event. As Henry Jarrett, the singers' agent and an architect of the burgeoning international star system, noted, 'the public of London—in Opera, as in most other matters are blazé, and don't care for an opera, unless there are one or more "vicious stars."² Thus far, this study has examined several broad institutional influences behind the birth of repertory opera: a slowdown in operatic innovation, financial pressures which encouraged the production and repetition of certain genres and specific works, and new obstacles to the importation of new works. This information regarding singers demands the additional consideration that a burdensome star system forced the annual repetition of certain standard works. Contemporary observers bemoaned that the high salaries of star singers produced a taxing set of economics which jeopardized strongly cast ensembles and quality performances, criticisms which persist even in today's opera environment.³ This traditional formulation does not explicitly consider how a star system related to the presentation and repetition of only the most familiar works in the companies' repertoires. The dynamic was more than a result of high fees; rather, the increasing hegemony of stars over the opera enterprise portended a fundamental change

¹ Other analyses explored included month, day of the week and featured tenor. Income increased as each season progressed and extra nights (Wednesday, Friday) earned more at the box office than subscription nights (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday). Saturdays had substantial box-office income. Receipts did not vary as markedly by tenor as by soprano.

² Henry Jarrett to J. W. Davison, undated but most likely February 1871, Davison MS Collection, 2, fol. 164r, British Library.

³ See, for example, Strakosch, 154-62.

in the way works functioned within the institution. This chapter will therefore turn to a more minute set of concerns: the management of singers and development of a performance schedule.

The roster of singers and the relative stature of star singers within the company directly determined the set of works an impresario announced in his prospectus as well as the number of times he presented specific works. This is not to say that any one singer could dictate which operas should appear on which nights, for although many tried, this scheduling power rested exclusively with the impresario. The singer-repertoire bond reflected a more subtle set of pressures at work; namely, the scarcity of leading Italianate singers; the peculiar timing of the London season; the London public's demand for stars; and especially, competition among two opera houses and other entertainments. These factors contributed to a great inflation in the terms of star singers' engagements as well as the size of artistic rosters beginning in the late 1850s. They constrained Gye and Mapleson's ability to schedule their singers and provoked strategic responses in the way the managers presented operas. Ultimately, certain genres and operas served specific functions within each company's schedule. Whereas the greater Victorian society classified specific works according to elements of national style, the managers applied a different classification system, one rooted in the exigencies of opera management. As a key driver behind the repetition of certain works from season to season and within each season, this process of codification was an important foundation for repertory opera.

Insecurity in the Singer Market

The engagement and management of leading singers created more anxiety for the impresario than any other activity. The diaries reveal that Gye worried daily about the demands and impetuous behaviour of star singers and that an acutely competitive market enabled top singers to enjoy unprecedented clout within the opera house. Before turning to these demands, it is worthwhile to provide some sense of the tense environment enshrouding the engagement of singers. Chapter 2 introduced two reasons for the belief

in the 1860s that leading singers were scarce: a perception that declining performance standards in Italy and a more taxing and 'unnatural' singing style diminished the number of singers who adequately commanded Italianate phrasing and timbre, and the diffusion of a limited pool of talent across an increased number of Italian opera houses. Other pressures exacerbated the competition for singers in London. These included new concert series, music festivals and tour destinations—particularly America—and, beginning in the late 1850s, renewed rivalry between London managers. As J. W. Davison asserted in *The Times* in 1862, 'there are not Italian singers enough to make up more than half a company at one large house.'⁴ Still, audiences' long-standing expectations to hear all the top singers remained high; the managers' exclusive dependence on earned income mandated that they continue to assemble as many top singers as possible for the summer season. The impresarios paid singers more highly and offered more contractual concessions than ever before to lure them away from other performance options and to outbid the rival opera manager.

After a period of relative tranquillity, the competition between two theatres for the same pool of singers was marked by heightened sensitivity and acrimony in the 1860s. The wholesale defection of principal singers from Her Majesty Theatre to form the Royal Italian Opera in 1846 had inaugurated a period of bitter rivalry for singers' services, which culminated in Lumley and Gye's court battle for the soprano Johanna Wagner in 1852.⁵ The Wagner debacle successfully warned impresarios away from 'double engagements' for some time. Besides, after Lumley bowed out of the opera scene in 1852, Gye had the pool of Italian opera singers largely to himself. It was not until 1859, when Gye fought his baritone Francesco Graziani in Chancery court for breaking his contract in order to sign with Smith and Mapleson, that hostility erupted once more. R. J. Webb's default on his promised contribution to the reconstruction of the Royal Italian Opera forced Gye to withhold a portion of his leading singers' salaries at the end of the

⁴ *Times*, 3 April 1862.

⁵ Dideriksen and Ringel, 24-25; PRO, *Lumley v. Wagner*, C33/1007, fol.637.760, 23 April 1852 and fol.687.850, 26 May 1852; C14/1345, 22 April, 17 and 21 June 1852; Grüneisen, 10.

1858 season.⁶ That autumn, as Graziani discussed his arrival date for the following season with Gye's deputy Augustus Harris, the baritone asked Gye for the money due (£160); Gye, away hunting at the time, was slow to respond but ultimately asked leave to pay it the following season. Graziani quickly took this response as a sign that his contract was broken—perhaps optimistically, for Mapleson had evidently been negotiating with him on Smith's behalf.⁷ When Gye discovered that Graziani signed with Smith in January 1859, he immediately showed Graziani's contract and correspondence to his rival: 'I added it was useless our going to law - when he said he thought quite the contrary as the publicity would do him an immense amount of good in fact it would be the best thing possible for his Italian opera!' Apparently, Smith knew that Gye would not want it revealed in a public forum that he was in such financial straits after the rebuilding of the opera house that he could not pay his singers.⁸ In the Chancery suit *Gye v. Graziani and Smith*, Mapleson fabricated evidence against Gye but the latter manager won every point in the case and enjoyed the services of Graziani that season.⁹ As with the other lawsuits discussed so far—the Knox and *Faust* suits—the Graziani case affected Gye's management style: he never shed his distrust of Mapleson, particularly where singers were concerned, and his renewed insecurity about singers' engagements led him to cede increasingly favourable terms.¹⁰

⁶ GD, 19 April 1859.

⁷ *Frederick Gye v. Francisco Graziani and Edward Tyrell Smith*, 9 May 1859, C15/638/46, PRO.

⁸ GD, 17 February 1859 ff.

⁹ *Gye v. Graziani*, 18 April 1859, C15/638/46, PRO. In his deposition, Mapleson claimed to have witnessed a conversation between Gye and Graziani backstage at the Théâtre Italien during which the impresario tried to convince the singer to return. Graziani's agent Amadée Verger, though an ally of Mapleson, claimed Mapleson was not there. The information did not damage Gye's case, but Gye seemed to resent that Mapleson would perjure himself in an attempt to do so (GD, 18 and 31 January 1868).

¹⁰ Gye was also disappointed that the lawsuit prevented him from announcing Meyerbeer's new opera *Le pardon de Ploërmel*, which would have enhanced his 1859 season prospectus. Meyerbeer insisted that Graziani appear as Hoël and would not let Gye announce it if this engagement were not certain: 'There is no doubt had that fellow Graziani not acted so shamefully & prevented Meyerbeer giving me the opera in time to announce it before the subscription was made I should have reaped a large profit' (GD, 29 April 1859).

After this litigation, a tacit code prescribed that a manager should not pursue a singer already committed to the other, although suspicions continued to run high. On this basis, Gye backed down from many negotiations through the 1860s:

[Bettelheim] said she did not yet know whether she should go to Her Majesty's Theatre next season - she had an engagement but did not appear to know the exact conditions of it....I told her that if she had an engagement my advice to her was to fulfil it or if she wished to get rid of it to do so by negotiation - I said I should be very glad to have her at Covent Garden but could only entertain the idea if she were perfectly free from other engagements.¹¹

Nevertheless, the managers often discussed company changes with singers from the rival house whose contracts were subject to renewal. Gye was horrified to discover that Mapleson had dined with Patti and Strakosch in Paris before the 1864 London season, the final year of Patti's first contract with Gye: 'Strakosch confessed that [Mapleson] had spoken about engaging Adelina & wanted her to engage with him now at the expiration of her engagement with me!'¹² While Mapleson had initiated that particular conversation, singers knew well how to manipulate impresarios' insecurities near the time that contracts expired. There were, in fact, several instances in these years where leading baritones and capable (but not star) sopranos and tenors switched companies; that is, singers who fell short of top billing at their own company and viewed a change as an opportunity to improve their position. One recurring pattern was for Mapleson to engage singers whom Gye rejected, but for Gye to sign them once they had established themselves in London at Her Majesty's Theatre. Such was the case with Louise Liebhart, Emilio Naudin, Enrico delle Sedie and Désirée Artôt. Nefarious as these migrations may seem, the manager's object in drawing from the other troupe was more to build his own company

¹¹ GD, 23 November 1864. A few weeks later, a similar situation arose with Ilma di Murska, whom Gye had pursued across Europe only to find she had signed with Mapleson but regretted doing so. Gye told her 'I could not under the present circumstances engage her and that I would not even discuss any terms for an engagement but that if she were quite free I should be very happy to try to arrange with her' (GD, 14 December 1864).

¹² GD, 28 February 1864.

than to undermine the other outright. Yet even if the incidence of company switching was not great, the impresarios continually wrestled with the fear that the 1847 defection or the Graziani imbroglio could recur at any moment.

Salaries

Under such conditions, a handful of stars had come to rule the roost by 1860, enjoying unprecedented stature and clout within the enterprise, a trend which became even more pronounced in subsequent decades. An analysis of the salary and terms awarded to a handful of top stars relative to other singers and to earlier eras illustrates this new development. Viewed together, the Coutts ledgers and the Gye diaries provide a detailed and precise understanding of compensation at the Royal Italian Opera over a long period of time; these sources in addition to pay lists discovered in the Mapleson Music Library afford more limited but equally useful insight into compensation practices at Mapleson's company. For the Royal Italian Opera, the financial accounts provide comprehensive evidence of each singer's monthly or seasonal paychecks. Gye's description of salary negotiations and payments help resolve the many incongruities which the numbers alone do not explain, such as the manager's motivation for engaging the singer, the length of the engagement and the reasons for withheld paychecks and salary reductions or increases. A comparison of average monthly salaries at the Royal Italian Opera demonstrates a vast differential between the few soprano and tenor stars and the rest of the company (table 11).

Previous studies have most typically cast salaries as seasonal, not monthly figures. Although Gye's salaries were nearly always specified in contracts as seasonal figures, a seasonal comparison would mislead since the length of an engagement varied from one to four months, as the bold and italic fonts in table 11 indicate. A monthly view provides an equitable basis for comparison and is fairly easy to develop since Gye typically paid singers monthly and Mapleson did so weekly, biweekly or monthly. This solution is not without problems of its own. First, it is sometimes difficult to discern how many months

Table 11: Monthly salaries at the Royal Italian Opera

	Tier	1861	1862	1863	1864	1865	1866	1867	1868	1869	1870
SOPRANOS											
Patti	HC	<i>440</i>	<i>600</i>	<i>670</i>	<i>880</i>	<i>880</i>	<i>880</i>	<i>966</i>	<i>940</i>	<i>1050</i>	<i>1130</i>
Lucca	HC			<i>150</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>667</i>	<i>750</i>	<i>650</i>	<i>390</i>		<i>700</i>
Nilsson (M)	HC									<i>810</i>	
Tietjens (M)	HC									<i>640</i>	<i>640</i>
Di Murska (M)	A									<i>450</i>	
Carvalho	A	<i>400</i>	<i>400</i>	<i>500</i>	<i>500</i>						
Penco	A	<i>440</i>	<i>440</i>								
Lagrua	A				<i>450</i>						
Sessi	A										<i>350</i>
Czillag	A	<i>300</i>	<i>350</i>								
Sherrington	B						<i>300</i>	<i>300</i>	<i>300</i>	<i>300</i>	
Fioretti	B			<i>210</i>		<i>267</i>			<i>280</i>		
Battu	B		<i>200</i>	<i>240</i>	<i>240</i>						
Grisi	B	<i>220</i>									
Artot	B				<i>150</i>		<i>275</i>				
Berini	B					<i>190</i>					
Fricci	B			<i>188</i>	<i>175</i>	<i>160</i>	<i>160</i>	<i>160</i>	<i>150</i>		<i>80</i>
Demi	B			<i>150</i>							
Vilda	C						<i>120</i>	<i>140</i>			
Sinico	C									<i>120</i>	
Galetti	C					<i>120</i>					
Orgeni	C						<i>120</i>				
Biancolini	C						<i>100</i>				
Liebhart	C					<i>80</i>					
Vanzini	C								<i>80</i>	<i>80</i>	
Nau	C							<i>65</i>			
Bianchi	C					<i>60</i>					
Dottini	C			<i>60</i>							
Rudersdorff	C	<i>40</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>80</i>					
Tiberini	C	<i>50</i>									
Tagliafico	C	<i>40</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>30</i>							
Vestri	C						<i>40</i>				
MEZZOS											
Didiee	A	<i>180</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>250</i>	<i>270</i>						
Edelsberg	A					<i>150</i>	<i>250</i>				<i>160</i>
Grossi	A								<i>160</i>	<i>160</i>	
Tati	B				<i>120</i>						
Morensi	B						<i>125</i>	<i>80</i>			<i>100</i>
Cari (M)	B										<i>100</i>
Olma (M)	B										<i>100</i>
Scalchi (M)	B									<i>80</i>	
Honore	B					<i>80</i>					
Mayer	B							<i>80</i>			
Sonieri	B					<i>70</i>	<i>80</i>				
Lustani	B			<i>50</i>			<i>50</i>				<i>48</i>
Locatelli	B								<i>40</i>	<i>48</i>	
Destinn	B				<i>45</i>						
Bauermeister(M)	B									<i>20</i>	

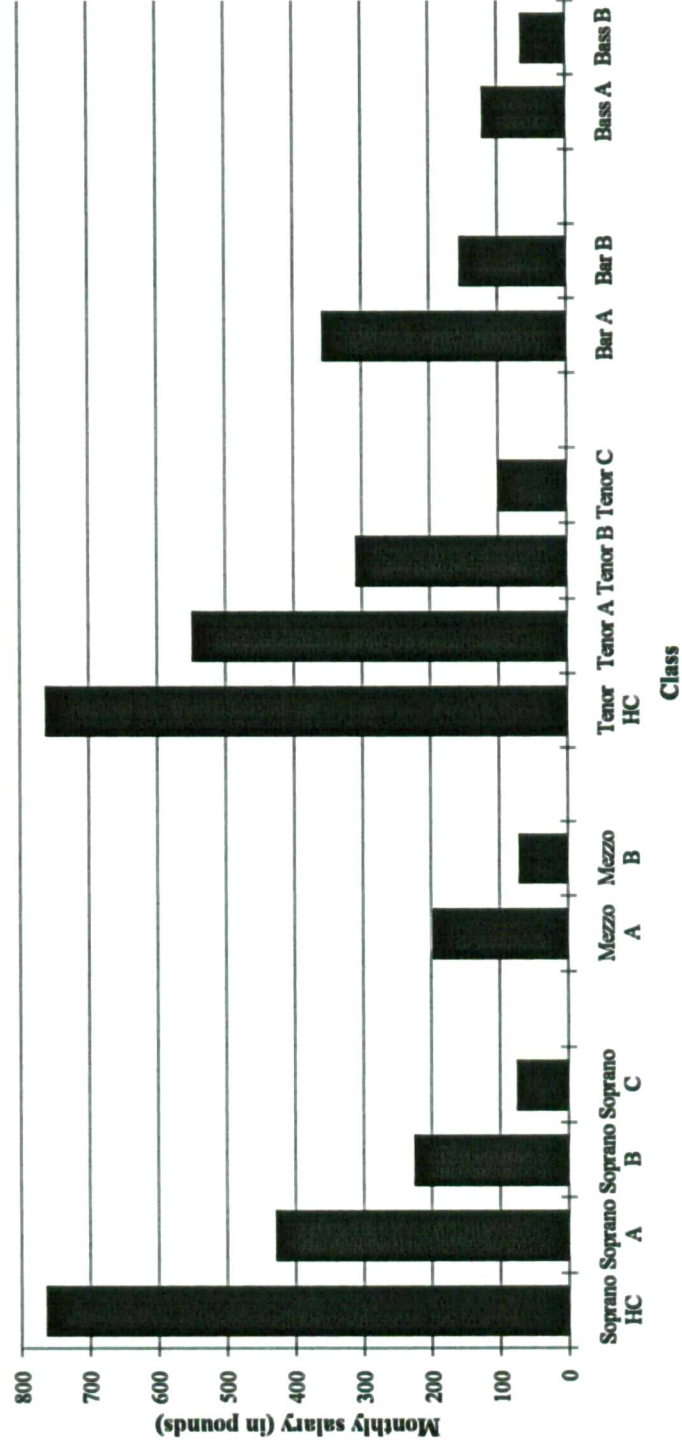
Note: Mapleson singers in the coalition noted with (M); HC=*Hors concours*
 Fonts indicate engagement lengths as follows: block=4 months; *italic*=3 months; bold=2 months; *italic bold*=1 month. Some engagements lasted one or two weeks longer than these categories; the salaries have been adjusted accordingly but the font does not reflect these cases.

	Tier	1861	1862	1863	1864	1865	1866	1867	1868	1869	1870
TENORS											
Mario	HC	750	833	833	833	750	700	700	700		625
Tiberini	A	550									
Tamberlik	A	600	600	600	600					200	
Wachtel	A		250		500	500					600
Mongini (M)	A									600	600
Nicolini	B						400				
Naudin	B			330	340		370	300	250	300	300
Brignoli	B					320	100				
Gardoni	B		250							60	
Gunz (M)	C										200
Neri Baraldi	C	160	160	160	140	140	140	140	125	100	
Corsi (M)	C									160	
Caffieri	C			140							
Fancelli	C						120	140	160		
Tasca	C					140					
Bulterini (M)	C									120	
Larocca	C										100
Chelli (M)	C									80	
Marino	C							40	40	40	50
Lucchesi	C	40	40	40	40	40	40				
Urio	C										30
Vizzani	C										30
BARITONES											
Graziani	A	400	400	400	350	400	350	300	450	400	450
Faure	A	240	340	400	350		350				
Ronconi	A	325		320	275	275	275				
Gassier	A					250					
Santley (M)	A									280	
Cotogni	B							200	160	160	200
Delle Sedie	B		180								
Colonese	B			140	120						
Medini	B					80					
BASSES											
Obin	A			220							
Schmid	A				150	225					
Bottero (M)	A									220	
Attri	A				120	140	150	150			
Tagliafico	A	120	120	120	120	120	100	100	80		80
Formes	A	100	100	100							
Zelger	A	100	100	100							
Petit	B							80	100		140
Bagagiolo	B							75	80	100	120
Ciampi	B	50	70	75	100	100	100	100	100	100	120
Scalese	B				80	100					
Capponi	B		32	40	50	60	80	80	80		80
Foli (M)	B										80
Polonini	B	50	50	50	45	45					
Patriossi	B	25									

Summary average monthly salaries at the Royal Italian Opera, 1861-70

		1861	1862	1863	1864	1865	1866	1867	1868	1869	1870	Average (1861-70)
Soprano	HC		600	670	880	774	815	808	665	833	823	763
	A	395	397	500	475					450	350	428
	B	220	200	188	191	206	245	230	243	300		225
	C	43	50	71	40	85	95	103	80	100	80	75
Mezzo	A	180	200	250	270	150	250		160	160	160	198
	B			50	83	75	85	80	60	49	87	71
Tenor	HC	750	833	833	833	750	700	700	700			762
	A	575	600	600	550	500				400	608	548
	B		250	330	340	320	385	300	250	300	300	308
	C	100	100	113	90	107	100	107	108	93	82	100
Baritone	A	322	370	373	325	308	325	300	450	340	450	356
	B		180	140	120	80		200	160	160	200	155
Bass	A	107	107	135	123	137	117	117	100	140	127	121
	B	42	51	55	58	53	80	80	80		80	64

Summary average monthly salaries at the Royal Italian Opera, 1861-70



an engagement lasted, particularly if the singer left in the middle of a month. Also, some of the leading *prime donne* including Patti, Lucca and Nilsson were paid per performance, so monthly compensation could vary significantly; for the purpose of these comparisons, straight averages are used. Further, these top singers sometimes received additional income for concerts or for supplemental opera appearances (over a number agreed upon in the contract) which is difficult to separate from the contractual salary figure. For the purpose of this exercise, though, it is useful to include this income; since the impresario did not usually pay lesser singers extra for such appearances, this money reflects the superior terms which top performers commanded. Finally, not all singers' salaries were specified in pounds sterling in their contract—francs were common since many of the singers were based in Paris—but since all were paid in pounds, that currency is used here.¹³

Three recent works, John Rosselli's *Singers of Italian Opera: The History of a Profession*, Judith Milhous and Robert Hume's 'Opera Salaries in Eighteenth-Century London,' and, with Curtis Price, *Italian Opera in Late Eighteenth-Century London*, provide useful terms for discussing compensation practices. Milhous and Hume identify three distinct pay brackets in use at the King's Theatre: lower, middle and upper categories, with the occasional singer earning a 'superscale' figure considerably above the rest.¹⁴ Rosselli analyzes salary according to voice type—*prime* and *seconde donne*, tenors, bass/baritones and second basses—at different points during the mid- to late-nineteenth century. Generally, tenors surpassed all but the most highly paid sopranos in salary, and sopranos, in turn, earned more than baritones. As centres for Italian opera proliferated beginning in the 1850s, rarefied stars commanded ever increasing terms—'*hors concours*'—while legions of semi-competent singers filled company ranks at

¹³ In *Singers of Italian Opera* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), Rosselli uses francs as a basis for comparison, appropriate for his international scope. Gye used the exchange rate of 25 francs to the pound.

¹⁴ Judith Milhous and Robert Hume, 'Opera Salaries in Eighteenth-Century London,' *JAMS*, 46 (Fall, 1993), 26-83; Price, Milhous and Hume, *Italian Opera*, 128-29.

even lower pay levels than before.¹⁵ Following these frameworks, table 11 categorizes each singer by voice category and their stature within the company (A, B, C or HC/*hors concours*): an 'A' rank refers to a star principal of the company, who did not create quite the same furore as *hors concours* singers, 'B' indicates a capable new recruit or utility singer who assumed principal roles but could not ensure packed houses, and 'C' a *comprimario* or young *débutant*. Summary averages for these categories appear at the end of table 11, in both tabular and graphic form.

The general salary developments Rosselli outlines in his broad view of the Italian opera circuit at mid-century are beautifully demonstrated by the specific case of London in the 1860s. A decade earlier, in 1850 or 1851, a young new member of the company or a *comprimario* would have received between £50 and £80 per month. Enrico Tamberlik, a top tenor, earned £290 per month and the *hors concours* singers—Mario, Grisi and Viardot—earned £480, £560 and £600 respectively.¹⁶ Ten years later, the lowest paid singers in the company still received £50 to £80. The salary bracket for leading tenors and sopranos such as Tamberlik, Theodor Wachtel, Rosa Czellag and Rosa Penco—all great attractions but by no means the best in the company—expanded to a range only the *hors concours* artistes could have expected before: monthly compensation between £300 and £600. Meanwhile, the stars continued to earn substantially more than the rest: £750 for Lucca, £833 for Mario and £880 for Patti. The sporadic salary reductions which appear in the chart came about for one of three reasons. In most cases, Gye actively attempted to reduce salary levels or at least to extract a longer engagement for the same pay. In 1863, for example, at the height of his financial crisis, he pressured many of his leading baritones and supporting sopranos to forego their last paycheck and successfully negotiated down their salaries for the subsequent year.¹⁷ At other times, such as in the

¹⁵ Rosselli imparts that star salaries escalated beginning in the 1830s but were cut dramatically in 1848 because of war, revolution and economic crisis (*Singers*, 135). In 1835, for example, Alfred Bunn paid Maria Malibran £125 per performance at Covent Garden (cited in Ehrlich, 45). Pay inflation of the late 1850s and 1860s therefore represents a second round of increases.

¹⁶ These sums, paid under the 'Commonwealth' agreement, include a share of the profits (GD, 5 April, 1 September and 23 October 1850).

¹⁷ GD, 31 July 1863.

cases of Mario, Joseph Tagliafico and Giorgio Ronconi, these reductions reflect an aging singer's diminishing ability or utility. But, for the most part, the salaries of top singers continued to escalate disproportionately to others through this period, and also outpaced average wage growth in the British economy.¹⁸ Indeed, table 12 shows that the salaries of the three highest paid singers in the company rose from one-third to nearly one-half of Gye's total budget for singers during these years.¹⁹ This compensation bias is powerful proof of the increased stature of star singers at the Royal Italian Opera.

Primarily, the Patti phenomenon propelled this trend, and the diaries and ledgers introduce copious new information concerning her meteoric rise in the company. Gye had engaged the unknown eighteen year old in 1861 for a trial period of two weeks for £20. Her overnight success soon drew unprecedentedly large houses and Gye immediately increased her salary to £150 per month.²⁰ A lucrative tour of the provinces

¹⁸ A comparison with salary growth in the economy at large is interesting, but not directly comparable since national averages are based on agricultural and manufacturing sectors. One source (Phyllis Deane and W. A. Cole, *British Economic Growth, 1688-1959* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967], 25) provides the following table of wage growth based upon selected industries:

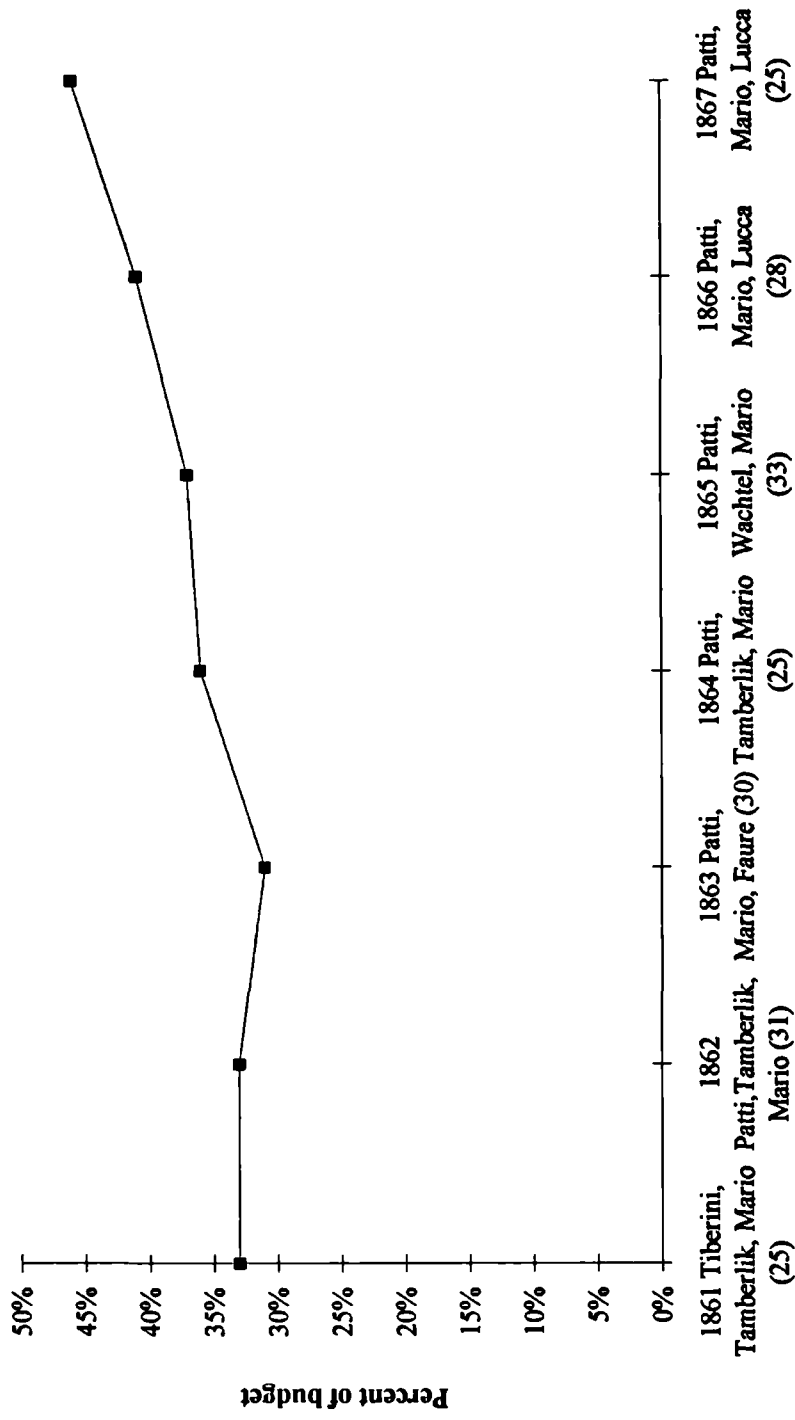
Year	Money Wages
1850	100
1855	116
1860	114
1866	132
1871	137
1874	155
1877	152

The growth of the highest paid singers at the Royal Italian Opera outpaced these averages. From 1850 to 1860, for example, Tamberlik's salary grew 107% and Mario's 56% as opposed to the norm of 14%. From 1861 to 1866, Patti's salary grew 100%, while the average growth was 16%. Tier A and B salaries remained mostly unchanged through the 1860s.

¹⁹ This type of analysis is suggested in Milhous and Hume, 'Opera Salaries.'

²⁰ According to the diaries, Gye settled the trial engagement with Maurice Strakosch on 9 May and on 22 May 'gave S. £210 on a/c also £20 her 2 week salary and we renewed, by a short note, the engagement to 15 August.' The payment patterns in the ledgers (1861) strongly suggest that this £210 was a first payment towards what at first appears to be a monthly salary of £300; a conversation Gye had on 7 July 1874, however, clarifies that it was only £150 per month. The salary figure of £440 in table 11 takes into account that Gye paid Patti to reclaim his control over her concert appearances and agreed to pay £50 for any extra appearance beyond two nights per week. In his *Souvenirs*, Strakosch says that Patti's first three performances were unpaid but that she received £150 as a monthly salary after these (32).

Table 12: Top three singers' salaries as a percent of total singer budget



Note: Three top singers listed by year. Number of singers in company appear in brackets.

that autumn offered a taste of things to come—Gye engaged her for £2,500 to sing three times a week for three months; Gye himself stood to earn a flat fee of £5,000 from John Knowles, the impresario running the tour.²¹ Patti's success quickly spread across Europe and, although her original contract already covered the 1863 and 1864 seasons, Strakosch successfully pushed Gye for more generous terms: specifically, for payment per performance, a cachet which only the greatest stars commanded. Strakosch initially asked £100 per night—'c'est trop fort!' Gye exclaimed—but agreed to give her £80 per performance in 1863 and 1864, £90 in 1865 and £100 for 1866 and 1867.²² This right to re-engage a singer at a predetermined figure was one of the only protective measures available to the impresario interested in curbing runaway salaries.²³ In 1867, Strakosch renegotiated the contract for £120 per performance and a £400 fee for a benefit night.²⁴ This rose to £140 per night in 1870 and leapt to £200 per performance in 1872 to put Patti on par with the sums Christine Nilsson had begun to command elsewhere—or so she believed. Patti never knew that her agent and husband actually returned £40 to Gye for each performance.²⁵ Lucca's salary increase was equally breathtaking. Gye brought her to London in 1863 for £150 per month after she had sung in major houses on the Continent for two years. In 1864 she made £200 per month but fled London midway

²¹ GD, 18 June and 4 July 1861. Ultimately, Gye allowed Patti to sing in Paris for the middle month of the tour.

²² GD, 14 to 17 February 1863.

²³ On the Continent, managers would also have recourse to the *dédit*, or 'forfeit' if singers did not fulfill their contracts; this arrangement was not in wide use in England at the time (Beale, *Impresario*, 76-77).

²⁴ GD, 27 July 1867. Although Gye held benefit nights for Patti and Lucca each season, these were not 'clear' benefits or even 'half' benefits where they would see income from the proceeds; instead, he paid them a high fee and the proceeds went to the company. This system of 'nominal benefits' had become standard practice by the 1830s (Ehrlich, 44). Benefits also brought the *prime donne* many gifts and accolades. For more on benefit practices at this time, see Rosselli, *Singers*, 142-3 and Milhous and Hume, 'Opera Salaries,' 78.

²⁵ GD, 21 June 1872. The entry for his negotiation with Franchi and De Caux reads, 'After a great deal of maneuvering it came at last to this that they wanted AP's engagement to be made out at £200 per night, but there to be an "understanding" that I was only to pay her £160.' An entry on 28 June 1873 confirms that the parties agreed upon this figure. At the time, this practice was more common in Italy than in England (Beale, *Light of Other Days*, 2:153).

through the season, frightened to attempt the role of Catherine in the new production of *L'étoile du Nord*.²⁶ When Gye accosted her in Berlin that autumn, she and her agent insisted upon a contract renegotiation even though Lucca was bound to Gye for two more seasons and had caused him to lose money the previous season. Since she had an offer to sing at another theatre and was jealous of Patti's salary, however, she asked for 6,000 Thalers per month, nearly £1,000. Gye threatened legal proceedings but found he had no rights as a foreigner in Berlin and agreed to pay her 10,000 for the season (£667 per month)—'a fearful rise.'²⁷ Such inflation led Gye's counterpart at the Paris Opéra, Emile Perrin, to attribute to Gye the escalation in singers' salaries which plagued all European managers: 'Perrin spoke of the high prices of the artistes generally and said that it was I who set the example & all the others were obliged to follow - I said I could not help it - I must have the best & they would not come if I did not pay them.'²⁸ Although a full comparison with salaries in other opera houses is beyond the scope of this study, readily available information suggests that the Royal Italian Opera consistently paid more for a singer than they could earn nearly anywhere else except America.²⁹ The diaries reveal several instances of experienced singers advising new recruits to demand high salaries from Gye, suggesting that singers commonly viewed a London engagement as an opportunity to raise their asking price.³⁰

²⁶ Gye's relation of his conversation with Lucca (GD, 26 October 1864) corrects the widely held view that Lucca left London because of poor reviews for her Marguerite in *Faust*.

²⁷ GD, 26 October to 5 November 1864.

²⁸ GD, 20 December 1864.

²⁹ Figures provided by Rosselli for the Naples Royal Theatre (San Carlo) in 1866-67 offer one basis of comparison. The contralto Giuseppina Tati earned £112 per month but she had earned £120 at the Royal Italian Opera two seasons earlier. The baritone Luigi Colonnese received £128 per month but had started at the Royal Italian Opera three years before at £140. The top salaries in Naples—*prima donna* Luigia Bendazzi at £280 per month and tenor Giorgio Stigelli at £263 per month—measured up to class B salary levels at the Royal Italian Opera. The lowest salaries in Naples—soprano Mlle. De Angelis at £12 per month and second bass Marco Arati at £17—fell far below the Covent Garden payments of £40 and £80 for singers serving similar functions (*Singers*, table 4, 137).

³⁰ GD, 1 March 1866.

The 1869 and 1870 coalition seasons reveal that Mapleson paid less than Gye for singers of comparable levels. This tendency may be related to his lower income base. Property boxes at Her Majesty's limited the income potential of the theatre, and as Milhous and Hume demonstrate in 'Opera Salaries' for the eighteenth century, this was a critical determinant of salary scale.³¹ It is also possible that Mapleson's liberal policies regarding concert appearances allowed him to keep salaries low, an idea for further consideration later. His baritone stalwart Charles Santley received £280 per month, but the leading baritones of Gye's company averaged £336 in the 1860s. Mapleson's leading tenor Pietro Mongini made £600 in 1869 which was on par with Gye's rates, but short of Mario's *hors concours* earnings. Mapleson's *prime donne* were also at a disadvantage. Di Murska earned £450 per month, Tietjens £640 per month and Nilsson £80 per performance (ca. £810 per month).³² By contrast, Lucca (in 1870) earned £700 per month and Patti earned £140 per performance (ca. £1,100 per month). Interestingly, when Mapleson's company is considered alone, there emerges a greater disparity between the salaries of stars and other singers than existed at the Royal Italian Opera. At the latter company, there were three clear, graduated salary levels, with *hors concours* singers reasonably above the top bracket. Mapleson's financial accounts for his 1880 season, extant in the collection of Coutts ledgers, reveal a much different compensation philosophy.³³ In a nine-week season lasting from 15 May to 24 July, Nilsson made the stunning sum of £2,800, £200 per performance. Zélia Trebelli, his loyal star mezzo, earned £715 for the season while his baritones Galassi and Giuseppe del Puente each

³¹ Milhous and Hume, 'Opera Salaries,' 79.

³² Gye was struck by Tietjens' comparatively low salary and said 'I supposed that she alone did not draw the public much - he said she did immensely and had great houses to *Medea* and *Fidelio*' (GD, 4 August 1868). This discrepancy suggests that Gye may have pegged salary more closely to drawing power than Mapleson did; of course, Tietjens had the security of a year-round engagement and other perquisites which may have enabled Mapleson to pay her less.

³³ Mapleson opened an account with Coutts & Co. in 1868 when the coalition began. After the partnership dissolved, he used this account for about £6,000 worth of transactions each year, a mixture of personal and business expenses. In 1880, though, he seems to have used it for all the receipts and expenses of his London opera season. The salaries for that year are given here as seasonal, not monthly, figures since engagement lengths are unclear.

made £200 and his principal tenor Italo Campanini £190. No one else in the company made more than £150 for the two-month season, including his other star soprano Marie Roze (£135) and the new acquisition, Lilli Lehmann (£83). A pay list from an 1881 American tour—not necessarily comparable to a London opera season but used here to corroborate Mapleson's payment philosophy—also survives, pinned to a wall in a back room of the Mapleson Music Library. It lists Etelka Gerster at a monthly salary of £1,150, Campanini at £590, Annie Louise Cary at £400 and Luigi Ravelli at £308. Apart from these four singers, six others made less than £200 (four of these less than £130) and fifteen of his 25 singers less than £45 per month. Mapleson's three most highly paid singers comprised 62% of the total singer budget in the 1880 season and 55% in the 1881 tour. These salary levels suggest that Mapleson's company, even more than Gye's, was not so much a 'troupe' as it was a showcase for a handful of stars or, at times, a single dominant force.

By 1867, singers' salaries had spiralled out of control such that Mapleson and Gye began to discuss possibilities for cooperating in ways which would fortify their bargaining positions or at least assuage the uncertainties which a competitive environment provoked. Mapleson proposed the first of these cooperative arrangements through a third party, the impresario John Knowles. He suggested creating ceilings for singer salaries, certainly with his own self-interest in mind since he could not match Gye's prices. Gye rejected the idea and proposed another: 'I replied that I could not rely on M's word, but said I should not object to an arrangement to take Her Majesty's Theatre off his (M's) hands & to leave the provinces to him agreeing to give my artistes permission to sing for him there.' This crafty solution would have rid Gye of his London rival and created a permanent provincial outlet for his singers, thus enabling him to make maximum use of his company and profit for himself. Mapleson promptly declined Gye's 'offer' to relieve him of Her Majesty's and proposed a third solution; Gye reported, 'he was willing to enter into an arrangement with me [not] to engage or interfere with each others artistes for the season 1868 - Knowles pressed me very much to enter into this

agreement, but I said I was afraid to trust Mapleson.³⁴ Again, Mapleson wanted to abolish singers' ability to play one impresario off the other as a means to drive up their prices and terms. Obviously, these various proposals were not without efforts to thrust the rival manager into a disadvantageous position, and perhaps the impresarios' deep-seated suspicion of each other ultimately precluded any agreeable solution. Nevertheless, the fact that the managers generated these ideas at all provides a sense of their increasing concern about recent developments in the singer market and also foreshadows their imminent union.

Roles

Salary was only one of several issues arbitrated in negotiations with singers. A wealth of material reveals that star singers pushed for other generous terms from the opera impresario, many with direct consequences for the programming and scheduling of operas over the course of a season and across seasons. A series of draft contracts exchanged between Gye and Mario before the 1861 season, now housed in the Royal Opera House Archives, provide an excellent framework for discussing the four points which the impresario and singer would negotiate besides salary: roles, arrival date, frequency of performance, and concert appearances (Appendix D).³⁵

The circumstances surrounding this series of contracts were unique. Gye usually renegotiated terms at the end of a singer's final season of engagement. If any details remained unresolved, he or Augustus Harris would conclude them on the Continent during the scouting trips of the off-season. At the end of the 1860 season, Mario and Grisi, by that time members of the Royal Italian Opera for thirteen years, did not re-

³⁴ All negotiations in GD, 24 and 25 June 1867.

³⁵ Apart from Elizabeth Forbes' brief reference to the existence of these contracts and description of the salary information in *Mario and Grisi* (152), no further use has been made of this rich material, to my knowledge.

negotiate their contracts but signed with E. T. Smith instead.³⁶ After Smith withdrew from opera management in the spring of 1861, the two came to Gye in early April seeking employment. 'What mean spirited wretches,' Gye noted, but relished the chance to re-engage his star tenor.³⁷ The timing of this negotiation deviated from usual practice, but the iterative process, whether conducted in person or, as in this case, by post, was standard, as was the singer's use of an agent, in this case John Woodford.³⁸ These contracts also employ the standard form Gye used for singer engagements, written in French. Mapleson's standard contract form was nearly identical, and also in French.³⁹ Curiously, Gye annotated the fate of each draft in its top margin; since no contract drafts for his other singer negotiations are known, it is unclear whether such record-keeping was standard. On 15 April, Gye sent the first contract to Mario, who returned it with alterations to which the manager could not agree. Although Mario's alterations do not survive in the collection, it is possible to interpret what these were based on changes Gye made to contracts 2 and 3. Gye sent the second contract to Woodford on 17 April who passed it to Mario in Paris the next day. It was returned with further alterations on 20 April and Gye duly dispatched another revised version to Woodford that day. One must assume that this revised version, mentioned in the notes at the top of contract 2, refers to contract 3. Woodford returned the latter document to Gye on 23 April, signed on Mario's behalf.⁴⁰

³⁶ GD, 10 August and 11 October 1861.

³⁷ GD, 10 April 1861. This attribution was uncharacteristic of what was otherwise a very cordial business friendship. Gye never cared for Grisi, however.

³⁸ Negotiations usually occurred either with another impresario, the singer's agent, the singer's husband or, as was the case with many male artists, the singer himself.

³⁹ *The Times* reproduced Mapleson's contract with the tenor George Bentham for the 1871 season, part of a court report for a case the impresario brought against his singer (27 November 1871). Although both men were English, this contract, too, is in French. Although it is based upon Mapleson's standard contract, it does not distinguish what information was specific to Bentham's engagement. This is the only copy of a Mapleson contract for a London season I have come across. The Mapleson Music Library holds two manuscript contracts between Mapleson and Patti for the 1884 and 1885 American tours.

⁴⁰ See also GD, 15 to 23 April 1861 which clarifies this chronology. Some emendations in contract 3 are in Woodford's hand, though it is difficult to discern because his penmanship is similar to Gye's.

Perhaps the most remarkable change to the final version of the Mario contract is clause 8, the specification of roles.⁴¹ Gye rarely formalized such guarantees in contracts; his standard contract did not include any such clause and, in fact, he wrote to Mario and Grisi that they would no longer enjoy such a privilege.⁴² However, as a condition for Mario's return, Woodford wrote into the final version the roles which Gye should give for the singer that year. Role specification served the singer in three ways: it allowed him to corner certain works as his own without fear of their going to rival tenors, it provided the basis for him to veto any other roles the impresario asked him to do as the season progressed, and it allowed him to reject new roles he did not want. The manager benefited as well—he secured his ability to mount particular operas if he desired—but role specification clearly provided greater gain to the star singer. In fact, the diaries reveal that role definition was critical to the decision of an established, successful singer to join or stay with his troupe. This issue, for example, concerned the rising soprano Ilma di Murska when Gye tried to recruit her in the autumn of 1864:

she was very anxious to come to Covent Garden as she found she had been very much deceived having been told that Adelina Patti did just as she liked and would not allow her (Murska) to have any parts!.... I told her that I was much pleased with her performance last night & that her style & parts would not at all clash with those of Adelina Patti-- that she could sing the Etoile du Nord &c &c⁴³

Similarly, Pauline Lucca wanted Gye to commit to a coterie of leading roles before she pledged a return to the company after her notorious 1864 flight: 'Lucca said she should like to sing Zerlina in *Fra Diavolo*, Leonora in *Trovatore*, Valentine, Marguerita (*Faust*),

⁴¹ Mario, a tenor, is listed for the role of Don Giovanni. Mario had played the role between 1858 and 1860, transposed for tenor voice. Leporello, played by the baritone Giorgio Ronconi, was also transposed (Rosenthal, *Two Centuries*, 121-22). Mario did not sing the Don at the Royal Italian Opera after 1860.

⁴² GD, 15 and 16 April 1861.

⁴³ GD, 10 December 1864. Gye discovered in this conversation that di Murska had already signed an engagement with Mapleson. Unable to read Mapleson's English contract, she had been deceived about the terms but Gye ultimately had to advise her to fulfill it. See also page 177, note 11, above.

the Page in *Le Nozze*, *La Juive* & if the part is not too long that in the *Africaine* should it be given.⁴⁴ Ten years later, the issue of rights to roles remained contentious, as Gye's attempt to bring Christine Nilsson to the Royal Italian Opera in 1874 reveals:

I said I wanted her most in April & she could then have the champ libre & could sing any parts she liked - I told her that Patti had during her engagement an exclusive right to the *Sonnambula*, *Barbiere*, *Zerlina* & *Otello*, but that hers was an old engagement [from 1872] & I did not intend to give others any exclusive right - Nilsson said that as she now sang the *Huguenots*, *Trovatore* & the strong repertoire which neither Patti nor Albani sing there would she hoped be no difficulty in her having some exclusive parts - I however would not promise - I said if she would come at the beginning of the season I would give *Lohengrin* for her - This seemed to strike her & she begged me to wait until her husband returned from Paris & to discuss the matter, conditions of money &c with him.⁴⁵

Even if Gye did not usually guarantee specific roles in a contract, leading singers pushed for informal agreements based on faith at the time of contract negotiation, as these and many other meetings suggest. In practice, the distinction was trivial, for Gye rarely presented another singer in an assigned role, regardless of whether it was exclusively guaranteed or merely promised.⁴⁶

In a troupe which included most of the best singers Europe had to offer, this process of role allocation was a tricky business. Among the higher echelons of the company, many of the principals knew the same roles, which resulted in ferocious jealousies and attempts to lay siege to a rival's parts each year. When Czillag took ill and could not sing *Le Prophète* one night in 1860, Gye made the rounds to find someone to replace her: 'Didiée refused to sing the Prophet, as she did not know it now!-- but afterwards said she

⁴⁴ GD, 27 October 1864. In 1865, Lucca appeared as *Zerlina*, *Valentine*, *Marguerite* and *Selika*. *Le nozze di Figaro* and *La Juive* were not given and *Il trovatore* was given in April, before Lucca arrived, with Antonietta Fricci as *Leonora*, a role she had assumed the previous season.

⁴⁵ GD, 29 May 1874. Nilsson did not come to the Royal Italian Opera. *Lohengrin* was not produced until 1875 with Albani as *Elsa*.

⁴⁶ Exceptions included instances of singer indisposition, one singer allowing another (usually a newcomer) to appear in a role, or, less frequently, Gye presenting the opera with another singer before the star arrived, as he suggested in the discussion with Nilsson.

would if I would take the part away from Csillag & give it to her!!! - I then went to Penco & told her she should have the part of Leonora [*Il trovatore*] next year if she would sing it to night - she agreed.⁴⁷ The challenge to the impresario was to arbitrate an equitable distribution of leading roles in order to keep all his top singers happy. Thus, in the beginning of the 1861 season, after Gye finally resolved the details of Mario's contract, he told Tamberlik 'I thought he had better let Mario have the part in Ballo in Maschera as he, T, had Prophete, & G. Tell already - I said he might keep the part of the Trovatore.'⁴⁸ Likewise, in 1865, Gye was concerned about giving enough parts to Lucca. He wrote to Mario, 'Je suis venu vous voir aujourd'hui pour vous parler de Fra Diavolo - Vous savez dans quel embarras je me trouve pour donner au public quelque chose un peu nouvelle et pour avoir une autre rôle pour la Lucca - Elle n'a que les deux rôles des Huguenots et Faust et nous les avons déjà donnée très souvent.'⁴⁹

What the Mario contracts and the preceding discussion do not answer very clearly is the question of who determined singers' roles, a question critical to the broader issue of artistic policy in the company. Did Gye envision an artistic programme for which he then selected singers and assigned roles, or did a core group of star singers really wield control over the schedule at the Royal Italian Opera by choosing the roles—and therefore the operas—they wanted Gye to present them in each year? The diaries lend credence to both possibilities. In 1863, Gye engaged Marie Miolan-Carvalho for the specific purpose of singing *L'étoile du Nord* in the month of July.⁵⁰ Likewise, in August 1863, as he began to discuss the renewal of Mario's 1861 contract, Gye had already considered thoroughly which works he would present the following season: '[Mario] had written

⁴⁷ GD, 1 August 1860.

⁴⁸ GD, 27 April 1861.

⁴⁹ 'I came to see you today to speak to you about Fra Diavolo - You know how desperate I am to give the public a novelty and to have another role for Lucca - She has only the two roles of Huguenots and Faust and we have already given them very often' (Gye letter to Mario, 19 June 1865, Item 65 in Mario correspondence, ROHA).

⁵⁰ GD, 1 March 1863. This engagement may have led Gye to decide on 11 April to present *Faust* later in the season. Miolan-Carvalho was Gounod's original Marguerite. She appeared in *Faust* that July and its success pre-empted the production of *L'étoile du Nord* altogether.

wishing to see me about his parts for next season - I told him the Faust, Fra Diavolo, Elisir, probably the Prophete & Don Giovanni (in case of Faure's absence)-- but I could not say all until it was decided when Lucca would come - He seemed willing to sing anything.⁵¹ While the first part of this statement indicates that it was Gye who considered the artistic programme and delegated roles, the manager's surprise at Mario's compliance hints that Mario typically would have had set ideas about what he would sing. Indeed, an exchange earlier in the season demonstrates such self-determinism at work:

I asked [Mario] if he would sing the tenor part in *La Gazza Ladra* which he refused - he said he thought Adelina Patti would have a much greater success in the *Trovatore* & so I told him he should sing it with her - I had asked Tamberlik previously (as he sang it last) if he cared about Mario singing it & he said "not the least" he should be glad to stay at home.⁵²

Ultimately, the diaries support both models of role allocation. Leading singers and impresario seem to have alternated as the driving force in determining roles, each with the power to veto the other at all times: Gye decided whether or not singers could assume roles they requested but could not force top singers to appear in roles they did not want.

Though accurate, this line of inquiry taken alone is misleading, for it gives the impression that each season, the star singer could choose or the impresario assign any roles from the domain of all the works the Royal Italian Opera had in its stores. This was not the case at all: each singer's repertoire was narrowly prescribed and very few principal roles changed hands from year to year. There seems to have been little doubt in anybody's mind—the impresario, the stars and, as we saw in chapter 2, even the public—about which singer in the troupe would assume each role. As *The Times* noted about Mapleson's *Nozze di Figaro* in 1868, 'Happily, the director of "Her Majesty's

⁵¹ GD, 5 August 1863.

⁵² GD, 21 May 1863.

Opera" had at disposal every one of the excellent artistes to whom his supporters are accustomed in the principal characters.⁵³ There were some cases in which the impresario needed to arbitrate between two singers and others in which singers might share a role; but usually, there was a consistent singer-repertoire bond within the company and certain works or roles became associated with an individual singer. Indeed, what emerges from all of the transactions discussed so far is the sense of a singer's exclusive 'ownership' of a role. Each season from 1847 to 1867, virtually no other tenor but Mario assumed the roles of Faust, Raoul (*Huguenots*), The Duke of Mantua, Riccardo (*Ballo*), Almaviva (*Barbiere*), Gennaro (*Lucrezia*), and, with a slightly higher number of deviations, Ernesto (*Don Pasquale*), Nemorino (*Elisir*), Fernando (*Favorite*) and Lionel (*Martha*). Likewise, Pauline Lucca monopolized the roles of Valentine (*Huguenots*), Selika (*Africaine*), Leonora (*Favorite*), Zerlina (*Fra diavolo*) and Cherubino (*Nozze*). Most roles that Patti essayed in the seasons after her début became hers for nearly every season afterwards: Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*), Amina (*Sonnambula*), Rosina (*Barbiere*), Norina (*Don Pasquale*), Adina (*Elisir*), Ninetta (*La gazza ladra*), Lucia, Dinorah, Catherine (*L'étoile du Nord*) and Juliette.

At Mapleson's company, select singers were closely associated with a much greater number of roles, although the strength of that bond was somewhat weaker than in Gye's company. Mapleson had only a few star singers (Tietjens, Trebelli, Giuglini, Santley and Gassier) who assumed the leading roles in nearly all the productions each season, but they ceded their roles to newcomers more frequently. Still, no one but Tietjens could touch the dramatic soprano roles of Lucrezia Borgia, Norma, La Contessa (*Nozze*), Valentine (*Huguenots*), Medea, Leonora (*Fidelio*), Reiza (*Oberon*) and Agathe (*Freischütz*).⁵⁴ In 1862, Willert Beale wanted Mapleson to cast the Marchisio sisters in *Norma*; he wrote,

⁵³ *Times*, 23 April 1868. 'Her Majesty's' appeared in quotes because Mapleson's company performed at Drury Lane that year, after the destruction of the Haymarket opera house.

⁵⁴ The exception came in 1866 when Giulia Grisi attempted a comeback in *Norma* and *Lucrezia Borgia*.

that opera belonging to the *répertoire* of Thérèse Titiens, then prima donna at Her Majesty's, it was necessary to obtain her consent before any announcement could be made. I wrote to Titiens and asked her to relinquish her claim to the *rôle*. In reply she told me very firmly that at no theatre at which she might be engaged should any soprano but herself sing the part of 'Norma'.⁵⁵

Likewise, di Murska alone commanded the high coloratura roles of Amina, Linda (*Linda di Chamounix*), and Astrafiammante (the name given to the Queen of the Night in *Il flauto magico*). At both houses, then, the issue for discussion between the impresario and his star singers before each season was not who would assume which roles that year, but which roles out of each singer's established repertoire would be presented. Principal singers without such celebrity, such as Emilio Naudin or Clarice Sinico, served utility functions, and either filled in for an indisposed singer or assumed a particular role one year but not the next. These singers enabled the manager to execute his plans even if his season met with some unexpected adversity. As Gye wrote to Costa in 1866, 'I have paid [Mad. Sherrington] very highly but as she knows so many parts of our repertoire a change would have caused much extra trouble and loss of time for rehearsals.'⁵⁶

A notable point about role identification in London in the mid-nineteenth century is that a singer's 'exclusive' roles were usually within a single, narrowly defined vocal and dramatic category, or *Fach*; conversely, nearly all the roles of a particular *Fach* which had an exclusive association went to a single singer. All of the Royal Italian Opera's soubrette roles, for example, musically characterized by lilting melody and dramatically by displays of charm and cunning, went to Patti. The principal roles in the company's French heroic repertoire, though sung in Italian, went predominantly to the native French and German members of the troupe: Miolan-Carvalho, Lucca, Battu, Didiée, Wachtel and Faure. Even though linguistic compatibility no longer existed, this particular casting

⁵⁵ Beale, *Light of Other Days*, 2:157. See also Bennett, 140-41.

⁵⁶ Gye letter to Costa, 5 December 1866, Item 21 in MC Papers.

derived from the association of French and German singers with a declamatory, as opposed to lyrical, singing style. At Mapleson's company, Tietjens assumed all the dramatic soprano roles while di Murska assumed those with high tessitura and intricate coloratura. This conservative approach to casting ('If it's a soubrette, it must be Patti') meant that when a manager lost a particular singer or as he awaited her arrival at mid-season, he lost the ability to perform broad categories of works until a new representative of that repertoire was engaged. In 1865, for example, Giuglini contracted a fatal illness and Mapleson's presentation of the Verdi and French repertoire, previously dominated by the star tenor, plummeted that season.⁵⁷ Lacking in tenor talent, Mapleson turned instead to the heavy programming of classical works, which showcased Tietjens and which his Austrian tenor Gustav Gunz could assume. The engagement of Pietro Mongini in 1866 enabled him to return in subsequent seasons to some of the repertoire previously associated with Giuglini, but not *grand opéra*, for which Mapleson no longer had competent singers.⁵⁸ Likewise at the Royal Italian Opera, Lucca was the foremost interpreter of French *grand opéra*, with clear command over the roles in *Africaine*, *Faust*, *Favorita*, *Fra Diavolo* and *Huguenots*. When she was not engaged for the coalition of 1869, the company dropped *Fra Diavolo*, *Africaine* and *Favorita* (and Mapleson's singers assumed *Faust* and *Huguenots*) only to reintroduce these operas in 1870 upon Lucca's return, suggesting a direct link between singer and genre. After 1873 Gye stopped engaging Lucca; thereafter, his lack of leading singers to fill her roles—and the need to accommodate the increasingly popular German repertoire—precipitated a gradual decline in the number of performances of French works.

This approach to casting is an important discovery for it suggests that opera programming in these institutions could vary significantly from season to season only if

⁵⁷ Verdi opera, 25% of the repertoire just two years earlier, fell to 7%. Part of the reason French *grand opéra* fell from 45% to 11% of performers was the commencement of the *Faust* case. Mapleson did present it twice and perhaps would have more frequently if he had had his tenor. The other half of the decline in French works can be attributed directly to Giuglini's demise.

⁵⁸ *The Times* claimed that the music of *Le Prophète* 'is entirely out of the natural scope of Tietjens' voice' and that 'Jean of Leyden does not lie readily within Mongini's means' (19 July 1869). See also Santley, *Student and Singer*, 248.

the leading singers changed. But remarkably, turnover among principal singers in the 1860s was not frequent at all, a reflection of the continuity of opera managers from the 1850s through the 1880s. From the mid-eighteenth century until the mid-1840s, the management of the opera houses changed hands frequently, and a new impresario would typically engage a different set of singers from his predecessor; with new rosters of singers came new artistic policies and repertoires.⁵⁹ For the first time since the management of John Rich, the original proprietor of Covent Garden from 1732 until his death in 1761, opera managers in London—Gye, Mapleson and, to a lesser degree, Lumley—achieved sufficient financial durability to ensure the continuity of their régimes. A single manager in place over time developed loyalties to singers and elicited loyalty from them. From the 1850s until the end of the 1870s, the rate of change among star singers at London opera institutions was slower than at any time previous. Patti, Albani, Mario and Graziani each sang at the Royal Italian Opera for a span of 25 seasons while Tietjens performed with Smith and then Mapleson for nineteen straight seasons until her death in 1877.⁶⁰ No wonder the repertoire changed so little during this period. The close association of principal singers with certain roles combined with long-standing loyalty to their companies meant that an impresario had virtually the same set of works to choose from each year.

Length of Engagement and Frequency of Appearance

Had impresarios been able to exert complete control over singers' activities for the entire duration of the London season, the exclusive association between singers and roles could have simplified the opera manager's job. However, star singers in the 1860s used their enhanced bargaining power to win greater concessions regarding the scope of their

⁵⁹ Price, Milhous and Hume, *Italian Opera*; Hall, 'Re-fashioning; Dideriksen, 'Repertory and Rivalry.'

⁶⁰ Mario had sung in London at Her Majesty's since 1839 (Cecilia Pearse and Frank Hird, *The Romance of a Great Singer: A Memoir of Mario* [London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1910; New York: Arno Press, 1977], 306).

activity, just as they had campaigned for higher salaries and role guarantees. These developments complicated the process of scheduling an opera season; the inflow, outflow and intransigence of singers created tremendous uncertainty for the impresarios and required them to increase the size of their troupes and juggle a number of variables in scheduling artists. As a response to these new limitations and demands, combined with the insoluble singer-repertoire bond, the impresarios developed programming formulae, assigning specific functions within the opera institution to certain works.

Returning to the series of Mario contracts, one recognizes considerable disagreement between the negotiating parties regarding the date of arrival in London. At the Royal Italian Opera, Gye was willing to negotiate salary in exchange for the guarantee that a singer would arrive in time for the season's start and stay with him for subsequent seasons at pre-arranged salaries. Gye had little difficulty booking *comprimarii* and new, young singers for the beginning of his seasons. The Mario contracts show that stars were more problematic, since they were in such demand elsewhere and seasons overlapped. In the second clause of the contract (version 1), Gye wrote the dates of Mario's engagement, the anomalous June start a result of Gye's having already engaged a leading tenor, Mario Tiberini, to replace him. Clause 11 was more characteristic, specifying that future engagements would last for three months. Woodford pushed Gye to clarify what time period he had in mind; the second version indicated 22 April for 1862 and 7 April for 1863—that is, engagements of 3½ and 4 months, respectively. This did not sit well—perhaps the next Paris season was to last beyond that starting date—and Woodford wrote into the third contract a date of 1 May. Gye's standard contract also stated that the singer must arrive six days before the engagement began in order to rehearse (clause 7); obviously a star had little interest in sacrificing paid engagements for unpaid rehearsals. Changes to the first contract therefore included cutting this time in half for the coming season and, by version 3, Mario successfully managed to avoid unpaid rehearsal days altogether for the 1862 season.

Although arrival date may seem like a minor technicality in a singer's engagement, it was critically important to Gye's ability to maximize star appearances and his income. In

1865, Patti was supposed to sing in the beginning of May. Illness apparently delayed her opening night until 13 May, though Gye alleged that Strakosch 'maneuvered to postpone her appearance' so she could sing at a lucrative concert in Bordeaux. Gye lamented, 'she ought to have began on May 1st! & it has been a great loss to me her not singing' and even put a price on this loss: 'Very pretty this from them, but I lose at least £1,000 by it this week & spend £800 for [Elena] Fioretti [needed to replace Patti in the beginning of May].'⁶¹ The bank ledgers confirm that his income for May was £1,000 less than the previous season and £1,600 less than the following season.⁶² A discernible trend in engagement lengths, indicated by the bold and italic figures in table 11, shows that most of the star singers limited their London engagements to three months or less. This created great worry for Gye and, continually, he paid more money for singers to join him for the entire season, indemnified Parisian impresarios to release top singers earlier, or hired additional singers to fill the company's ranks early in the season, as in the last example of Patti and Fioretti. The issue of singers' arrival dates in London was not as relevant to Mapleson since he engaged several of his top singers for the entire year, not just the summer season. His standard contract may have stipulated that engagements begin in the month of April, although it is unlikely.⁶³

A third set of contract changes involve the scope of opera and concert activity. One of the most attractive aspects of the London season from a singer's perspective was the potential to sing in concerts outside of the opera house. The audiences were certainly bigger—in the tens of thousands at the Crystal Palace. In addition, if the singer could arrange his or her own outside engagements through an agent, concerts remunerated singers more highly than operas. Historically, Her Majesty's Theatre had exerted tight control over outside engagements, one of the key considerations behind the singer

⁶¹ GD, 2 and 13 May 1865.

⁶² Coutts ledgers, 1864 to 1866. Earned income was £12,222 for the month of May 1864, £11,225 in 1865 and £12,843 in 1866.

⁶³ Bentham contract, *Times*, 27 November 1871. The second clause reads, 'Cet engagement commencera au commencement de la grande saison de Londres au mois d'Avril, et continuera pour toute la saison.' It is unclear which part of this phrase, if any, was standard.

defections of 1847.⁶⁴ In the early years of the Royal Italian Opera, Gye was lenient about concert appearances, perhaps in part because the star singers held a financial stake in the company at that time.⁶⁵ In the 1860s, however, Gye forced singers to cede control of these engagements. He sought to earn the extra concert income himself and to limit their exposure as a way to confer prestige upon appearances at his own theatre; he also resented the increasing incidence of patrons inviting singers for dinner—and encouraging them to perform for nothing.⁶⁶ In Gye's standard contract, clauses 1 and 4 strictly regulated his singers during the London season: the singer engaged him- or herself to perform in concerts and operas at all the theatres and concert halls of England, Ireland and Scotland as Gye saw fit, giving him large scope over their activities. The singer also pledged not to sing anywhere else in Britain or Ireland during the rest of the calendar year.

Perhaps the language was so strong because the stakes for concerts were so substantial. In 1863, Gye engaged Adelina Patti's talented sister Carlotta exclusively for concert appearances at a rate of £400 per month; a typical concert at the New Philharmonic Society or the Agricultural Hall in Islington brought him 100 guineas for her services.⁶⁷ Gye paid a newcomer, Marie Vilda, £120 per month or roughly £10 per appearance, but he received £52.10s for every concert she sang.⁶⁸ With a Crystal Palace concert featuring Adelina Patti, Carvalho, Tamberlik, Graziani, Naudin and Formes, Gye shared the revenues with George Grove and expected to earn between £400 and £500 on a night his opera company did not perform.⁶⁹ Concerts outside of the London area were even more lucrative. Gye agreed with Arthur Chappell and Charles Hallé to allow

⁶⁴ Hall, 'Re-fashioning.'

⁶⁵ Dideriksen and Ringel, 6.

⁶⁶ GD, 14 July 1875.

⁶⁷ GD, 18 April, 7 May and 4 June 1863. Carlotta Patti was slightly disabled and supported herself with metal braces, dissuading impresarios from presenting her in opera.

⁶⁸ GD, 9 July 1866.

⁶⁹ GD, 17 July 1863.

Carlotta Patti and an unnamed tenor to sing one concert in Manchester and one in Liverpool for 300 guineas.⁷⁰ In 1876, Mapleson provided three singers to the Bristol Festival for £1,050.⁷¹ Obviously, singers had much to gain if they could negotiate concerts for themselves or at least see some of the income from these appearances. Singers coveted equally performing at private concerts during the London season. Whereas a previous generation of singers would have appeared at aristocratic homes merely as hired musicians, performers in the 1860s enjoyed greater opportunity to mingle with the guests and receive the affirmation of society; these prestigious affairs also included a *cadeau* for the singer.⁷² Gye viewed these concerts as ways to reward loyal, wealthy supporters.⁷³ However, he also resented that singers stayed at these parties well into the night, risking their indisposition for subsequent opera performances, and that private concerts given on opera nights stole his core audience: 'It is the Queen's Concert at Buckingham Palace tonight - Patti and Vilda sing there - So many are invited that it greatly affects R.I.O.'⁷⁴

Mario's contracts expose a tension between the negotiating parties regarding the right to control concert activity. Again, the star succeeded in winning favourable terms. The first version of the contract already included several emendations to the standard contract, indicating that Mario had enjoyed special treatment for some time. Changes to clause 4 enabled Mario to sing outside of greater London without Gye's written permission.⁷⁵ Clause 9, a space provided to add special considerations, stipulated that Gye could not present his star tenor more than three times per week. In contract

⁷⁰ GD, 29 April 1863.

⁷¹ C. Hey letter to Mapleson, 7 July 1876 and Mapleson letter to Ransom & Bouverie, 17 July 1876, Barclay's Records Services.

⁷² Ehrlich, 40-44.

⁷³ See, for example, GD, 8 July 1868.

⁷⁴ GD, 9 July 1866.

⁷⁵ '50 miles outside of London' excluded the most lucrative local venue, the Crystal Palace in Sydenham.

versions 2 and 3, Woodford successfully pared down Gye's ability to make engagements for Mario, first limiting the manager's control to appearances in England, and then limiting it further to the Royal Italian Opera and Crystal Palace. Mario also successfully won the right to appear in private concerts during the opera season (version 2, clause 4) and the right to sing anywhere he wanted during the autumn and winter (version 3, clause 4).⁷⁶ Further, Woodford prevented Gye from presenting Mario two nights in a row. Gye did secure for himself the ability to engage Mario for two more seasons at pre-arranged terms. Yet even here, Mario won the ultimate concession: a note after Article 11 stipulated that should the singer decide not to come to England at all in future years, he could abandon the engagement without penalty.

The amount of control Mario claimed was unique among Gye's singers. Other top singers usually succeeded in their bid to arrange private concerts, but rarely the lucrative public ones.⁷⁷ Further, most of the principals won assurances from Gye to sing no more than three times a week (including concerts) and not twice in a row. Adelina Patti was the exception; paid by performance, not by month, she pushed Gye to guarantee at least two performances per week.⁷⁸ Mapleson's singers appeared in many more concerts than Gye's, since his deputy Henry Jarrett had strong ties with many of the leading concert presenters.⁷⁹ Mapleson apparently granted leading singers the right to retain their

⁷⁶ The syntax of this clause is slightly confusing because of a grammatical error in Woodford's emendation. 'Près la dite saisons' is most likely 'près de la dite saison.' The clause would mean 'M. Mario will sing in concerts as well as operas but he will neither sing outside of the theatre during the season nor let his name be posted or announced for a performance near the said season 1861, without the written permission of M. Gye, except at a distance of more than 50 miles from London and in society concerts.' In so many words, the new clause extended to Mario the right to sing within 50 miles of London at any time before or after the opera season.

⁷⁷ In 1862, for example, Battu pushed for the right to arrange private concerts and Graziani 'would not sign [his engagement] because I would not let him sing at concerts,' holding out until the impresario finally conceded (GD, 7 January, 24 and 25 July 1862). In 1861, Gye allowed Patti the right to sing in concerts outside the theatre but after she made such a great sensation, he paid Strakosch £600 to repurchase this right (GD, 22 May 1861).

⁷⁸ GD, 29 July 1867.

⁷⁹ See, for example, the relative abundance of Mapleson's singers in the advertisements for concerts at Crystal Palace on the front page of *The Times*, 29 April 1868.

concert earnings.⁸⁰ Given the size of concert fees, it is possible that this concession enabled him to pay lower salaries. The Gye diaries introduce the possibility that Mapleson received a kickback from this arrangement. When Gye tried to engage Tietjens in 1862, she insisted upon the right to sing at concerts but agreed to give Gye one-third of these earnings—an uncharacteristic arrangement for Gye to have made, which more likely originated in Mapleson's existing contract with her.⁸¹ It also appears as if most of Mapleson's singers did not limit the frequency of their opera appearances in their contracts as stringently as Gye's. His star singers regularly appeared three or more times each week through the 1860s. Bentham's contract said that he would not have to sing more than four representations per week, or six concerts.⁸²

Singers' ability to limit the scope of their activity bore significant implications for the size and composition of the two troupes. The impresarios responded to increased demand for opera by packing a greater number of performance nights into the season. If, along with this trend, star singers at Gye's company limited the length and frequency of their London appearances and singers at both companies sought concert engagements, an increase in the size of the companies was unavoidable. In the years before the fire of 1856, the Royal Italian Opera engaged an average of 23 singers per year but between 1861 and 1867, the company numbered 28 on average, swelling as high as 33 in 1865.⁸³ One reason for this growth was that, since *hors concours* and tier A singers came for three months or less, Gye had to employ tier B singers to assume lead roles for the

⁸⁰ Smith's engagements, which Mapleson negotiated and later assumed, granted this right (GD, 8 March 1861). Gye referred specifically to Mapleson's practice in a later period (GD, 9 July 1875). Mapleson's contract with Bentham suggests the impresario did not extend this right to lesser singers (*Times*, 27 November 1871).

⁸¹ GD, 28 February 1862.

⁸² *Times*, 27 November 1871.

⁸³ These figures are based on Rosenthal's cast lists in an excellent Appendix to *Two Centuries of Opera*, rather than the lists in the Coutts financial ledgers which do not include minor *comprimarii*. Rosenthal seems to have generated these lists from the newspaper accounts he amassed to write his history of the theatre. The increase in singers did not come about directly because of the greater musical requirements of French *grand opéra*; those works had appeared regularly in the early 1850s when the troupe was slimmer.

period before the stars arrived in London (table 11). Once the stars came, the manager could not simply dismiss these singers. Because of the limitations top stars imposed on their engagements, Gye needed to retain competent singers for the duration of the season. It was, of course, in Gye's interest to present the stars as frequently as their engagements allowed in order to maximize box office income and to placate their egos. In 1865, for example, Lucca appeared 19 out of a possible 46 performances for which she was in London and Patti sang 25 of 52 nights; in the nine weeks they overlapped, only eight performances featured other sopranos. Nearly every performance at the height of the opera season, therefore, was a star's night. Lesser singers would only appear sporadically. Many of them could achieve substantial celebrity abroad—for example Eleonora Grossi and Désirée Artôt.⁸⁴ This produced an awkward dynamic whereby Gye needed these singers but did not use them frequently or pay them very much; conversely, singers valued a London engagement, but could receive more attention elsewhere. As a result, nearly 40% of his singers stayed only one year. Shorter engagements intensified this sense of constant entry to and exit from the company throughout the season; in the mid-1860s, less than 40% of the company stayed in London for the entire season and nearly one third stayed for two months or less, all at varying parts of the season. The stability of his troupe undermined, Gye could not cast his operas nor schedule the season methodically.⁸⁵

Gye responded to this problem over the course of the 1860s. By 1866, as the salaries of *hors concours* singers escalated, he gradually pressured his top singers to stay in London longer. This enabled him to create schedules with greater certainty and to downsize his company. The reductions came out of the tier A and B categories, forcing him to depend more than ever before upon a few highly paid singers. Concurrently, he increased the salaries for tier C sopranos and basses by 120% and 50% respectively in

⁸⁴ According to Arditi, Artôt was a great favourite in Germany (213). Grossi created the role of Amneris in *Cairo* (*New Grove Opera*, 2:552).

⁸⁵ This situation contrasts in part with the Earl of Harewood's description of stable companies which began to emerge in the 1860s and enabled theatres 'to cast from strength almost any opera they wanted to perform.' ('Casting,' *New Grove Opera*, 1:760).

1865-66 (table 11). In effect, Gye scaled back his employment of expensive but little-used middle rank singers and reapportioned their roles to cheaper singers of lesser ability. Gye was well aware that he sacrificed a policy of well-rounded casts. In 1868, he had a row with Costa over this issue, as the conductor had particular ideas about the cast he wanted for *I Puritani*. Gye could not satisfy the request and recommended alternates, saying 'I could no longer pay for perfection as the public would not pay for it.'⁸⁶ The impresario Willert Beale concurred with this observation in 1867,

One popular name is more attractive to the multitude than any *ensemble*, however numerous or perfect its execution...It is of course to [the manager's] interest to engage those artists who are the most attractive, and to surround them with others who shall be efficient, but shall cost as little as possible. A manager who does otherwise will throw money away for which he can expect no return. This is undoubtedly the 'star' system against which so much has been said and written; but as a matter of business, it is the only system which pays, and draws the largest receipts with the least risk.⁸⁷

The public paid for the stars, not for the ensemble, so it was prudent to follow a policy of presenting stars supported by singers of low rank. Gye's change of focus marked a direct break from the spirit in which the Royal Italian Opera had been created in 1846, an institution intending to feature the ensemble not the star.

The composition of Mapleson's company differed substantially from Gye's. Although Mapleson launched his company in 1861 with only twelve principal singers, he quickly bolstered his forces to amass a company which rivalled Gye's in size: eighteen singers in 1862 and between 23 and 26 from 1863 to 1867, with an exceptionally large company of 34 in 1866. These steady figures give a misleading impression of his company's stability. In truth, the roster changed radically from year to year; on average, 60% of the singers were new recruits. Put in other terms, fully half of the 90 singers Mapleson engaged between 1861 and 1867 sang with his troupe for only one year whereas only nine (10%,

⁸⁶ GD, 6 April 1868.

⁸⁷ Beale, *Impresario*, 86.

mostly his stars) could be considered company mainstays, having appeared in four or more of these seven seasons.⁸⁸ As with Gye's company, part of the reason for this high turnover must have been the wide disparity in the payment and use of the singers. In the four seasons preceding the arrival of Ilma di Murska in 1865, Tietjens and Giuglini sang in nearly every opera performance: in the 1864 season of sixteen weeks they appeared 56 and 57 times respectively out of 69 performances—which was a lower proportion than in any of the three preceding seasons. In 1865, di Murska performed twenty times in nine weeks, out of a possible 34 performances for which she was in London; Tietjens assumed each of the other fourteen performances during this period and appeared an additional sixteen times in the other five weeks of the season. Lesser singers were entirely marginalized. No doubt Tietjens was a great attraction and the possibilities that she financed the operation and had intimate relations with Mapleson should not be discounted as reasons for her frequent appearance. Such reliance on one singer was foolish, however; it adversely affected Mapleson's performances and the soprano's voice, for she often sang when she was ill.⁸⁹ The star system of the 1860s and its related pressures clearly ushered changes to the artistic rosters which involved new levels of complexity for the management of singers. It is now possible to turn to the scheduling solutions the impresarios adopted in response to these developments.

Scheduling

In today's opera environment, artistic administrators of major international companies decide upon which works to present three years ahead of time, sometimes more. Daily schedules, too, are determined a year or more in advance. In the mid-nineteenth century, planning times were shorter, but the popular notion that impresarios decided upon a particular evening's performance only hours before the curtain rose, depending upon

⁸⁸ By contrast, 30% of Gye's company, including most of his principal singers and some loyal *comprimarii*, stayed for at least four years of the period 1861-67.

⁸⁹ See Jarrett letter fragment to Davison, undated, Davison MS Collection, fol. 175.

what opera was ready and which singers they could find, is misleading. Gye and, to a lesser degree, Mapleson, applied considerable forethought and structure to the task of scheduling operas. Returning to the questions raised in the beginning of this study, one might therefore ask why the managers repeated certain works each year and why they presented a subset of these works so frequently within a given season. The dynamics between impresario and singers, examined in the last section, afford greater insight into these questions. The managers' repertoire choices were not exclusively a matter of aesthetics and popular taste; rather, strategic planning and efficient company management played an important part in shaping these decisions, particularly as the hectic season unfolded.

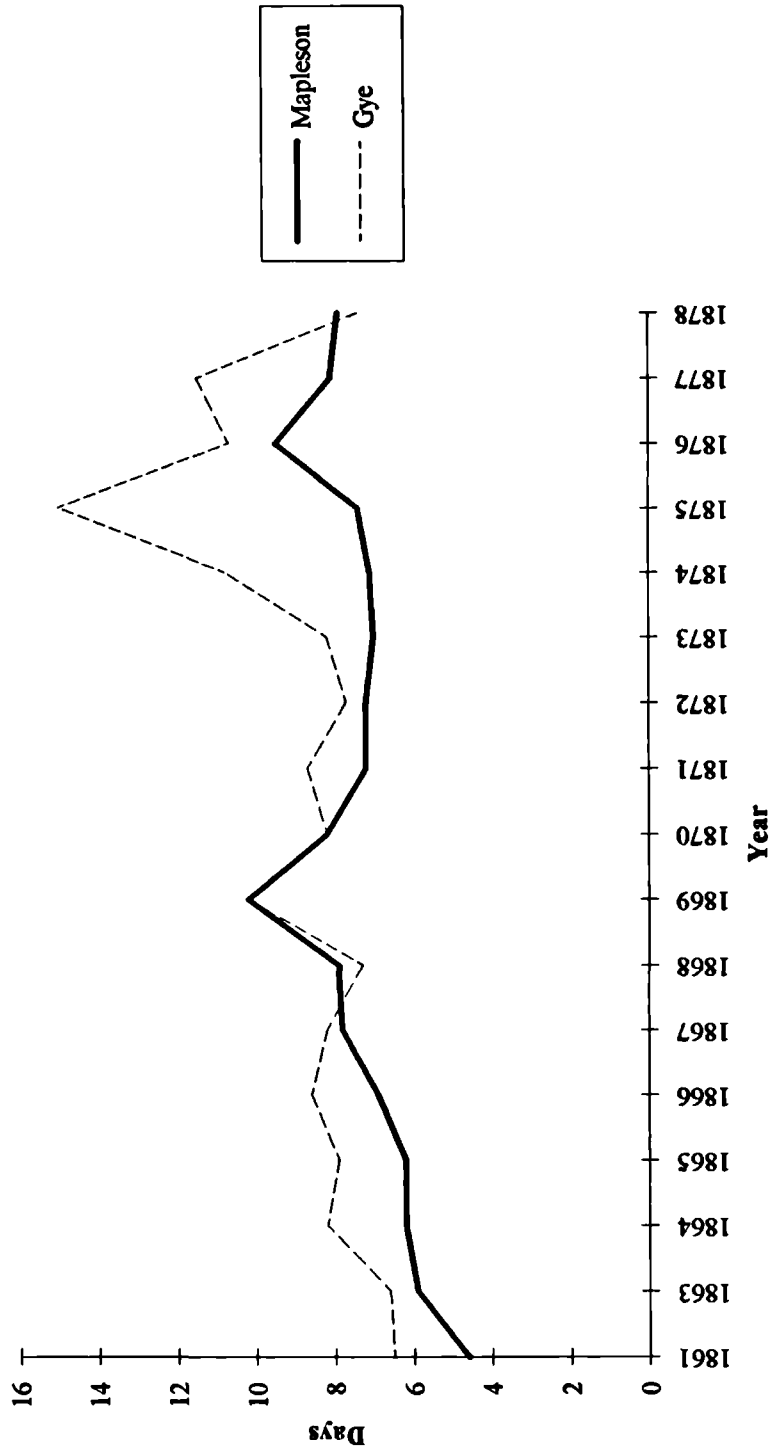
A comprehensive analysis of the patterns of daily announcements for operas in *The Times* helps us to understand Mapleson and Gye's different approaches to the task of scheduling opera performances.⁹⁰ The managers seem to have created budgets and general plans by the time the season began.⁹¹ As it progressed, however, the managers discarded many plans and scheduling became more touch-and-go. Analysis reveals that, at the beginning of the 1860s, Gye announced his programmes with a lead time of one week on average while Mapleson scheduled his five days in advance (table 13).⁹² Most typically, Gye would announce an entire week's programme in the paper on the preceding Wednesday. Mapleson tended to announce performances only a few at a time, in dribs and drabs.

⁹⁰ This analysis is based upon my database of opera performance in London, 1861-78. Since it was in the impresarios' interest to advertise future performances as early as possible in order to achieve maximum advance bookings, one can safely assume that the first appearance of a performance announcement indicates that the impresario had set the schedule the day before. Gye's diaries corroborate this assumption. On several occasions, he expressed frustration that an advertisement did not appear in the paper the day after he sent it. One might argue that an impresario knew the schedule further in advance but may not have wanted to pay for advertisements for more than a week or ten days; however, the managers frequently announced a night two or even three weeks in advance, confirming that it was advantageous to advertise as early as plans were settled.

⁹¹ Mapleson budget, 9 May 1879, Barclay's Records Services. The front cover of Gye's 1858 diary contains a similar budget.

⁹² This table shows the data for the entire period 1861-78. Patterns for the years 1868-70 will be discussed in chapter 6 and, for 1871 following, in the afterword.

Table 13: Lead times



This difference represented more than just Gye's superior organizational skills; it reflected the distinct artistic structures of the two companies. Mapleson's troupe was small in the early 1860s, and his few stars performed in most of the operas. Since they would have been prepared to sing nearly every night, Mapleson may not have needed to alert them well in advance of a specific performance. A flexible approach to scheduling also allowed him to arrange more concert appearances for his singers on short notice. Gye juggled a greater number of star singers and strictly limited their concert activity so greater lead time suited him better. As competition between the two managers intensified through the course of the 1860s, each began to plan further in advance, and attempted to be the first to announce an evening's programme and excite the interest of the public. Over the course of this period, the size of Mapleson's company increased, and his need to plan more rigorously became more pronounced. By 1867, Mapleson competed with Gye on equal footing, both planning an average of nine days in advance. Still, Mapleson continued to announce only one or two programmes at a time, not an entire week.

Gye's structured approach to scheduling reflected a clearly defined strategy for programming specific operas, a conception of when and how frequently certain works should be presented or had to be presented given their association with certain singers. These patterns enable us to discern how Gye used repertoire as a strategic tool; that is, as a means to use his singers efficiently, circumventing the constraints which their engagements imposed. From a scheduling perspective, the repertoire of the Royal Italian Opera divided cleanly into four categories: 'season beginners,' presented with frequent repetition before all the company was assembled; 'star vehicles,' mounted weekly once particular singers arrived; *semi-stagione* blocks, works given during a discrete period of the season in rotation with one another; and 'fillers,' operas presented only sporadically or as substitutes during the season. These were not Gye's terms—he never explicitly categorized his repertoire this way in his diaries—but the patterns in season schedules demonstrate this policy in effect.

The beginning of each season at the Royal Italian Opera was fraught with chaos, regardless of the company's financial and artistic strength, largely because Gye's roster was thin and revivals needed to be prepared and staged very quickly. The lead time with which he scheduled operas reflected this pressure: four to six days in April as opposed to seven to ten in May and June. Each April, Gye selected three to five operas from an unchanging, limited pool of works and alternated them until his stars arrived. His programming formula at this time of year consisted of *Guillaume Tell* or another one or two *grands opéras* (usually by Meyerbeer), *Ballo* or another one or two of the most familiar Verdi operas, and a Bellini or Donizetti *opera seria*. After repeating these works frequently, he usually presented them only one or two more times during the remainder of the season, if at all. These works shared a few characteristics in common. First, they were favourite works of the subscribers, whose patronage Gye depended upon in the slow month of April, and several included the most celebrated elements of *mise-en-scène* in the Royal Italian Opera's arsenal: the Skating and Coronation scenes of *Le Prophète*, the first act and meeting of the cantons in *Guillaume Tell*, and 'all of *Masaniello*.⁹³ Significantly, the principal soprano parts in these works lay outside the set of roles assumed exclusively by Patti and Lucca. Along similar lines, they were familiar roles which the new, less established sopranos who did arrive in April could easily undertake. Since Gye presented Patti and Lucca at least twice a week once they arrived, leaving only one or two nights a week for other works, the beginning of the season was virtually the only time he could present operas they did not interpret. Precisely this concern influenced Gye's position as he coordinated the London première of Meyerbeer's *L'africaine* with Émile Perrin: 'I told him I thought it would be...most surely better for me to have it in 1866 instead of 1865-- for in 1865 I must give it in June or July when I

⁹³ A review of the 1863 season in *The Times* (3 August) listed the most celebrated scenes in the repertoire.

had Patti and Lucca but in 1866 I could give it in April.⁹⁴ Although the 'season beginners' fell out of frequent rotation after April, the fact that Gye consistently chose them from a limited set of works guaranteed their inclusion in the company's fifteen most performed works (table 2).

Related to this list of season beginners was the set of works Gye programmed as 'fillers,' scheduled sporadically through the season, and often called upon as last-minute substitutes when changes to the opera were required. Try as he might to adhere to the programme advertised in the papers, Gye was forced to change the opera frequently as the season progressed. Between 1861 and 1867, 16% of performances had to be changed, roughly one per week.⁹⁵ The problem of changes to the opera became more severe each season, a reflection of precipitous financial difficulties, frequent rehearsal problems with Costa and the complexities of managing a larger company. By 1866, Gye switched nearly 25% of his performances. Changes to the opera, whatever the reason, hurt the managers in several ways. As Gye wrote to the Prince of Wales' treasurer in 1869 after the Prince requested a change:

Unfortunately, the opera [*Dinorah*] having already been announced for some days & Madame Patti not having sung it for several years, a great interest is excited & a large number of boxes & stalls is already let, and as I told you this morning, the great difficulty we have, (putting all money considerations aside) in changing an opera under such circumstances, is the dissatisfaction of those who, after having given up other engagements, find themselves disappointed.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ GD, 20 December 1864. Gye presented it on 22 July 1865 with Lucca, although he originally planned to do it with Marie Battu, who arrived in April. For details on Gye's astute negotiation for the rights to this work, see George Servi res, 'Les transformations et tribulations de L'Africaine,' *Rivista Musicale Italiana*, 34 (1927), 90 and Dideriksen and Ringel , 19-20.

⁹⁵ Compiled from author's performance database, 1861-78 and the Gye diaries. This figure does not include nights when Gye changed the opera in order to give a repeat performance of an acclaimed new opera or singer. It does include all other changes to the opera, whether the reason for them is known or not.

⁹⁶ Gye letter to Francis Knollys, 17 June 1869, 1f-4f, Add. C29, Royal Archives. See letter from 'Stall 53' to the Editor, *Times*, 6 May 1870 for a subscriber's complaint about changes to the opera.

If an opera had to be switched, subscribers and booksellers became upset, patrons who had bought tickets for the intended performance could and did demand refunds, and some of the scheduled singers were inconvenienced.

When such changes were required, Gye would typically present a filler opera. These utility works overlapped with those which served as season beginners. After the month of April, many of the season beginners would reappear once or twice in this capacity. Additionally, in any given season, Gye programmed some of these works exclusively as fillers: apart from the perennial *La sonnambula*, these varied annually, but frequently included *Ballo*, *Lucia*, *Martha* and *Trovatore*. As Davison noted,

When brought forward unexpectedly, as substitute for something else, M Flotow's lively work [*Martha*] has almost as good a chance of being welcomed with a shrug as *Il Trovatore* itself, which is not only given *bona fide* oftener than any other opera, but, three times out of four, is used as a palliative to soften the throes of disappointment.⁹⁷

The similarities between season beginners and fillers are straightforward. Just as a season beginner, fresh in the throats of the singers, could be reinstated for a single performance later in the season, these other works were among the easiest in the repertoire to throw upon the stage. They required the fewest principal singers and, as the most universally familiar works with certain lead roles unclaimed by the company's stars, they were the easiest to mount on the nights when Patti or Lucca did not perform.

Significantly, these works are precisely the ones George Bernard Shaw isolated when he bemoaned the state of opera programming under the Gye and Mapleson régimes. His criticisms were not new in the 1890s: contemporary observers recognized that these works were overexposed. Even in the mid-1860s, Davison jibed persistently that these specific works were 'worn out' and 'hackneyed' and occasionally praised the managers for avoiding them:

⁹⁷ *Times*, 7 May 1866.

Mr Gye deserves a vote of thanks for letting a season go by without one representation of that irrepressible *Trovatore*, which used not more often to be given on its own account, or as a test of the capabilities of new comers, than as a substitute for other and better operas, at a moment's notice unavoidably withdrawn. A whole season without *Il Trovatore* is a season to be remembered.⁹⁸

This statement acknowledges that the recurrence of 'easy' operas such as *Trovatore* was related less to their enduring popularity and more to their ability to help managers in a pinch, that is, when rehearsals or singers created scheduling problems. The stale flavour of the repertoire may have been less a function of Gye or Mapleson's faith in the superiority of these works, as Shaw would have it, and more a result of management complexity.

Once Lucca and Patti arrived, Gye began to rotate his 'star vehicles' into the schedule, the three works for which they were most celebrated: *Faust*, *Don Giovanni* and *Barbiere*. Gye presented these once a week for a period of at least six weeks (although not all at the same time). In some seasons, Gye scheduled an additional opera with this regularity for Lucca, for example *Huguenots* in 1865 or *Africaine* in 1866. While the conservative tastes of the fashionable audience of the Royal Italian Opera help explain this programming pattern, subscriber demand alone could not have sustained such frequent repetition of so few of these singers' greatest roles. Closer analysis reveals a second reason for this programming trend: the expansion of the opera audience and performance nights during the 1860s. We have seen that growth in audience demand prompted performances on Fridays and sometimes on Wednesdays at the height of the season. Although subscription series had become more flexible, enabling a prospective supporter to select Monday and Thursday nights in addition to the traditional Tuesdays and Saturdays, these 'new' extra nights were not included and therefore had no comfortable subscription base. On these nights, it made economic sense for Gye to

⁹⁸ *Times*, 29 July 1867. Among the many examples of Davison calling works such as *Trovatore* or *Lucia* 'hackneyed', see *Times*, 25 April 1864 and 10 August 1865.

present only the most popular works from his repertoire. *Don Giovanni*, *Faust*, *Barbiere* and *Huguenots* were presented far more than any other works.⁹⁹ With this strategy, the impresario also maximized the income he could receive from presenting a star singer. Since subscriptions were sold at a discount, a full house on a Wednesday or Friday would generate greater income than one on a subscription night. The manager had to balance this appealing prospect with the need to present his greatest singers to the subscribers.

Gye programmed his novelties and several of his important revivals according to a schedule which today's opera administrators would easily recognize: a *semi-stagione* system whereby an opera appeared frequently during a limited period, and alternated with other operas scheduled in a similar fashion. Typically, Gye mounted these works one to three times per week for two weeks and then, depending on the work's success and the number of weeks remaining in the season, perhaps revived once or twice later. Works new to the company appeared the most times in a two-week period, perhaps out of necessity more than anything else. Since the rehearsal process delayed these premières until the end of the season, little time remained to present them; if successful, the opera was repeated frequently to maximize exposure and income. Thus, the Royal Italian Opera *Faust* appeared eleven times in July 1863, *Africaine* ran four times in the space of a week in July 1865 and, in 1867, *Roméo* enjoyed seven performances in sixteen days. This type of programming brought with it efficiencies in publicity, stage management and rehearsals. There were, however, limits to how long a new work could run. Unlike the ethos which prevailed before the 1840s—to repeat a new 'hit' for many nights in succession—either the manager needed to present his other stars or the season came to an abrupt end shortly after the work appeared.

Gye's *semi-stagione* strategy further elucidates the development of programming structure at the Royal Italian Opera, shown in table 5. The few new works which Gye

⁹⁹ In 1864, Gye presented only *Don Giovanni* and *Faust* on these nights; in 1865, he staged these works again as well as *Barbiere*, *Favorita*, *Huguenots* and *Norma*; in 1866, Gye presented *Barbiere* and *Don Giovanni* and, in 1867, *Don Giovanni* and *Faust*.

presented after 1861 were mostly French *grands opéras*, a function of audience taste, the ease of importing works from France, and his engagement of singers strong in the French repertoire, most notably Pauline Lucca. From 1861 to 1868, the Italian/French balance gradually shifted from 60/40 to 40/60 spurred particularly by *Faust* (1863), *Africaine* (1865), and *Roméo* (1867). Italian works such as *Sonnambula*, *Lucia*, *Traviata* and *Trovatore*, typically programmed as fillers and season beginners, gave way to these newer, more attractive items.

Whereas Gye followed a more or less consistent schema each year with regard to the programming of individual works, Mapleson adopted a flexible approach to programming in order to maximize presentations of the opera *du jour*. Unlike Gye, Mapleson did not designate any works as season beginners, because the arrival of singers was not a problem. Like his rival, he presented a few works on a weekly basis, but these varied from year to year, depending upon what opera in his repertoire was particularly exciting; usually, a new work which featured Tietjens or an established work with a new singer. In 1863 and 1864, it was *Faust* with Tietjens; in 1865, *Medea* with Tietjens; in 1866, the two vehicles for his new star, Ilma di Murska, *Huguenots* and *Dinorah*; and in 1867, *Faust* and *Traviata* both with Christine Nilsson.¹⁰⁰ Also like Gye, he tended to present star vehicles on non-subscription nights.¹⁰¹

Mapleson presented at least six other works each season in *semi-stagione* fashion. However, whereas Gye would programme a successful new work two or three times a week for a two-week period, Mapleson tended to clear his schedule entirely and create extra performance nights to mount a run of consecutive presentations. This was much easier for him to do: since he did not need to placate as many highly paid singers as Gye and did not limit singers' performance frequency, he could stage works with great repetition. Nearly all Mapleson's new presentations followed this model as did several of

¹⁰⁰ It is likely that he would have programmed *Faust* with this regularity each season but did not because of Gye's lawsuit.

¹⁰¹ In 1864, Mapleson presented *Faust* and *Robert le Diable* most frequently on non-subscription nights; in 1865, he gave *Lucia*, *Lucrezia* and *Sonnambula* and, in 1866, *Don Giovanni*, *Dinorah* and *Huguenots*.

his revivals; most of these works featured Tietjens. In 1863, after the tremendous reception given to the première of *Faust*, for example, Mapleson ran the opera for nine consecutive performances, a tactic Davison called 'without example in the recent history of Italian Opera.'¹⁰² Likewise in 1864, he presented a winter season of 21 consecutive *Fausts*, and then a summer season which included five *Falstaffs* in a row and five *Mireilles*; in his autumn season of 1865, he presented *Der Freischütz* for eight out of twelve performances. This programming style further informs the pattern of 'surges' in table 5. As established earlier in this study, Mapleson retreated to his core Italian *opera seria* and *buffa* in years of financial difficulty. In more stable years, the repertoire balance swung radically towards the genre to which the new work or notable revival of that season happened to belong.

Mapleson's list of filler operas was more extensive than Gye's but, again, included most of the Italian operas presented with greatest frequency: *Ballo*, *Barbiere*, *Lucia*, *Lucrezia*, *Norma*, *Sonnambula* and *Trovatore*. He also shifted most of his classical repertoire—*Freischütz*, *Fidelio*, *Medea*, *Oberon*—to this list of filler operas in 1866, before abandoning these works altogether when he moved to Drury Lane in 1868.¹⁰³ The fact that Mapleson scheduled at least half of his repertoire each year as fillers scattered through the course of the season reflects several things about his management. On the most basic level, one must concede that he planned poorly. Although Mapleson switched operas less frequently than Gye (13% of his performances, or one change every two weeks), most of these substitutions were due not to problems with singers but to delays in preparing new works.¹⁰⁴ Frequently, he would announce the première of a

¹⁰² *Times*, 29 July 1863. He was referring to London, since *stagione* programming was typical on the Continent.

¹⁰³ This gradual abandonment of the classical repertoire further supports the hypothesis put forth earlier that Mapleson's attempt to integrate forgotten works of the past into his repertoire had failed. The arrival of Christine Nilsson may have absolved him of the need to present Tietjens in such a wide variety of works. Rosenthal's claim in *Two Centuries* that Gye would not allow the production of these works under the 1869 coalition is misleading, for clearly Mapleson abandoned the policy before the amalgamation.

¹⁰⁴ See chapter 4, pp. 158-160.

novelty, but as that day approached, announce its postponement for want of more rehearsal. In these instances, it was typical for him to mount one of the filler operas in its place, the easiest to prepare on short notice.

The information introduced in this chapter provides a second reason for this scheduling tendency: the greater turnover of singers meant that he needed more works which a newcomer could easily assume. Débutantes at his company usually made their first appearance in *Sonnambula* or *Rigoletto*. If the singer succeeded, the opera was repeated several times in the following weeks and the singer went on to essay *Martha* or *Lucia*. If she failed altogether, the work was dropped and the work achieved only a single performance. Both managers adopted scheduling principles which fit somewhere between a *semi-stagione* and pure repertory system. Analysis reveals that Gye operated with a more complicated, perhaps more sophisticated approach than Mapleson, which considered how specific works could function best within the context of his season. He depended less upon the body of Italian works usually called upon as fillers, although the vicissitudes of opera management promoted frequent recourse to these operas for both managers. Their different approaches to scheduling reflected the unique resources and capabilities of each company.

Outside Influences on the Opera Schedule

Apart from these general programming guidelines, several additional factors shaped the managers' repertoire choices as the season progressed. Changes to the opera have already been discussed. The programming of the rival house was also an important consideration in devising an attractive schedule. The last chapter demonstrated the efforts to be first to announce the production of a new opera or revival, as a means to dissuade the other from presenting it. Since the companies often performed the same works each season, similar stratagems characterized programming on a weekly basis. Patterns in *The Times* reveal a fascinating series of 'cat and mouse' maneuvers whereby one manager would withhold the performance announcement for a certain date; wait to

see what work the other scheduled; and then put forward the same work for that date. This tactic either forced the public to choose between the companies or scuttled the other manager's plans outright. The 1863 season demonstrates this trend well. On 9 April, Gye announced *Puritani* for 14 April with a relatively unknown cast; two days later, Mapleson publicized the same opera for the same night with Tietjens, Gassier and Giuglini. Gye was quick to take his revenge. On 30 April, Mapleson announced *Barbiere* for 5 May as the début of his new star mezzo, Zélia Trebelli. Two days later, Gye advertised that he would present the work in the same week with Patti and Mario. Later that month, Mapleson heralded *Traviata* for the début of another of his new singers, Désirée Artôt. Gye had already scheduled *Prophète* for that night but the day after Mapleson's announcement, he changed his opera to *Traviata*; Mapleson removed his *Traviata* the day it was to be performed, allegedly because Artôt was indisposed. With two successful productions of *Faust* running in London during the month of July, it was only a matter of time before the two houses staged it simultaneously. Mapleson forced the event within a week of the Royal Italian Opera première. On 14 July, Gye announced *Faust* for the 16th as a replacement for *L'élisir d'amore*, which was not yet ready. On the 16th, Mapleson changed his *Trovatore* to *Faust*, even though he had presented it just the night before.¹⁰⁵ Two weeks later, Mapleson again scheduled *Faust* in opposition to the Royal Italian Opera, and Gye complained that the box office was 'not good.'¹⁰⁶ The data from the 1860s, taken as a whole, suggest that Mapleson forced these competitive situations more frequently than Gye. He tended to wait for Gye to commit his programme to paper before announcing his own, perhaps another motivation for the shorter lead time with which he scheduled operas.

Audience taste did not seem to cast substantial influence over the decision to give certain operas on certain days. Chapter 3 showed that Mapleson gave popular works as

¹⁰⁵ Although Mapleson had programmed a run of ten *Fausts* earlier in the season, it would have been unusual for him to run two in a row at this time of the year.

¹⁰⁶ All schedule information taken from *Times* announcements 9 April to 30 July 1863. Gye's comment appears GD, 30 July 1863; his descriptions of receipts do not exist for the other nights mentioned.

well as the classical repertoire during the cheap nights at the end of his season. This chapter posited that both managers frequently filled extra (non-subscription) nights with the most popular works in the repertoire and that Gye gave works with attractive *mise-en-scène* and *ensemble* in April to please the subscribers before the stars arrived. Other analyses, however, have not revealed other relationships. This finding is significant in itself. The last chapter demonstrated that issues of taste played an important role in the managers' decisions to import certain works to London. Once the season began, however, aesthetics seemed to play little role in the determination of a schedule; issues of company management were more important.

The Gye diaries reinforce this hypothesis. Apart from individual star singers, no single person or group of people (e.g., subscribers, booksellers, press) regularly influenced Gye's selection of repertoire. Subscribers often asked Gye to give a certain opera for dates they planned to attend the theatre, but he rarely agreed.¹⁰⁷ The one notable exception was the Prince of Wales. As discussed in chapter 1, Albert Edward replaced the Queen as the leading representative of the royal family in the theatres after the death of the Prince Consort in 1861. After his marriage in 1863, the new royal couple became frequent patrons of the Royal Italian Opera, usually attending twelve times over the course of the sixteen-week season. They seemed to attend Her Majesty's less; in 1866, they attended Gye's company thirteen times, and Mapleson's four.¹⁰⁸ The Prince had a distinct bias for *grand opéra*; more precisely, his bias was for the operas which featured Pauline Lucca, with whom he was allegedly having an affair.¹⁰⁹ Of the operas he attended in 1866, seven featured Lucca (two *Favorita*, two *Faust*, two *Fra diavolo*, *Africaine*), four Patti (two *Barbiere*, one *Don Giovanni*, *Crispino e la comare*),

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, GD, 3 June 1865.

¹⁰⁸ This comparison is based upon different sources, which might understate the total for Her Majesty's. Gye always lists the Prince's visits in his diary; *The Times* usually mentioned royal visits to Her Majesty's or other theatres in the Court Circular or in a separate notice, but not always.

¹⁰⁹ GD, 27 May 1867, 9 May 1868, 10 May 1870, and 29-30 May 1871.

and one the new talent Marie Vilda (*Norma*).¹¹⁰ The Prince frequently made a direct request for operas or for specific singers to appear at private concerts. Sometimes this necessitated changes to the opera, other times not, but Gye invariably endured substantial inconvenience for the favour of his patronage:

The Prince of Wales came and told me he wished Lucca to sing at the State Concert on Tuesday [in four days]...for which Patti and Mario are already engaged and also some of the Band & Chorus! I told the Prince that the only operas I had in which neither Mario, Patti nor Lucca sing are Masaniello & Norma, but both which require chorus! & that in fact the Opera announced for Tuesday viz: Fra Diavolo was the only one we could give (having Lucca) but if she were to go I should not [know] what to do - He then wanted Lucca to go [to] the Palace after Fra Diavolo but that would be too late....I told the Prince that the Subscribers would grumble very much & make disagreeable remarks if I changed the opera-- but that his wish to me was quite sufficient & I would do anything he liked and change the opera to Masaniello, but then neither the Chorus nor Graziani could go-- but they could have Cotogni - I saw the Prince had set his mind on the matter so I said I would change the opera.¹¹¹

The Prince of Wales was a formidable force whose interests could wreak havoc with Gye's carefully laid plans. His clout and particular preferences combined to shift Gye's programming slightly towards French *grand opéra*.¹¹² In 1869 and after 1872, Lucca did not sing at the Royal Italian Opera, the Prince attended far less (four times total in 1869 and an average of five times per season after 1872), and representations of the French repertoire fell (table 4).

¹¹⁰ The Princess of Wales attended one performance of *L'africaine* without the Prince, making thirteen performances which one of the two royals patronized that season.

¹¹¹ GD, 14 June 1867. In this situation, Gye substituted *Don Carlos* for *Fra Diavolo* but afterwards exclaimed, 'there was not £100 in the house!!' (GD, 18 June 1867). According to Francis Knollys, Mapleson also went out of his way to accommodate the Prince (GD, 20 May 1875).

¹¹² Gye never imported a work to England at the behest of the Prince. In 1864, for example, the Prince encouraged Gye to produce *Die Zauberflöte*, but it did not appear until the coalition five years later.

Contemporary commentators, ranging from critics like Grüneisen and Shaw to impresarios like Mapleson and Strakosch, have blamed the 'star system' for effecting the demise of Italian opera, and debasing the quality of opera performance generally. Similar notions continue today. Many observers have a vague sense that the high fees and commercial orientation of leading singers impose economics which require opera houses to mount only the most familiar works, the safest for attracting large audiences. This chapter has attempted to examine this platitude with more rigor, focusing on the preconditions which enabled the rise of a star class of singers, the sorts of demands they could make on a company and how these demands translated into the programming of repertoire. In the mid-nineteenth century, programming patterns were more than mere reactions to the economics created by high salaries. Clearly, the two were related, but managers' decisions encompassed a wider set of concerns. A range of concessions to singers promoted changes to the size of companies and the way managers deployed the artists in their companies. Some works appeared often because of associations with leading singers and others because a certain method of scheduling accommodated the troupe particularly well.

Although the management of star singers seemed to constitute the most direct influence over the scheduling of operas, the last three chapters have shown that it was only one of several important considerations during the competitive era 1861-67. Chapter 3 addressed the broad institutional issues a manager of Italian opera faced as he chose which operas to present. The last two chapters have examined the more minute concerns of managers which shaped the selection, presentation and repetition of certain operas. The next chapter will turn to managers' attempts to create a new business model at the end of the decade which, they hoped, would enable them to enjoy greater profitability and break the operational and artistic stranglehold which the existing model imposed.

Part 3
The Industry Realigns, 1868-70

Chapter 6

Opera Monopolies

The preceding chapters have examined in detail the industry circumstances and management practices which affected the financial stability and artistic innovation of opera companies in London between 1861 and 1867. It took a major calamity to force this entrenched but fundamentally limiting system into a period of critical reflection and reassessment. The destruction of Her Majesty's Theatre by fire on 6 December 1867 ushered in three years in which theatre entrepreneurs sought to redefine the operatic landscape in London and, particularly, to establish a monopoly of Italian opera, the prize which had eluded them for the previous twenty years. Memoirists and historians of opera in London have tended to treat the Gye-Mapleson coalition of 1869 and 1870, the fruit of these efforts, in a superficial manner. Arditì, a typical commentator, proposes simply that Mapleson and Gye merged because they could no longer continue to operate as rivals, and then he praises their unequalled array of *prime donne* and great financial success.¹ Conversely, Grüneisen portrays the coalition as the impresarios' collusive attempt to reassert control over an industry in which power had become more diffuse.² The Gye diaries and other sources expose a more complicated and vital set of developments surrounding this realignment, explored here for the first time. These new details promote questions which serve to refine further our understanding of how artistic policies of this period were secondary to and dependent upon the more pressing concerns of financial liquidity and power within the opera industry.³ Contrary to what Arditì's

¹ Arditì, 180; see also Wyndham, 256-57 and Rosenthal, *Two Centuries*, 163-64.

² Grüneisen, 3-43 *passim*.

³ The diaries for 1868-70 reflect the most frenetic amount of activity of Gye's entire career. An account of all the twists of these negotiations, though fascinating, would supersede the bounds of this study. Instead, the institutional developments will be summarized and greater attention afforded to their implications for artistic practices and programming decisions.

observation suggests, competition between two Italian operas had been deleterious for over two decades; what in particular, then, provoked a crisis at this point in time and not earlier? Why did these two rivals, renowned for their differing management styles, choose coalition as a solution? How did they approach the task of merging two artistic enterprises into one and what were the programmatic implications of monopoly? If opera directors could truly no longer countenance competition, why did the monopoly dissolve so quickly? Finally, what were some of the long-term musical and institutional consequences of these three turbulent years? This chapter will demonstrate that although the new measures attempted to solve the operational restrictions inherent to a competitive environment, artistic reform remained peripheral to their concerns. The new ventures, which never addressed the diffusion of power across the opera industry, could not surmount the pressures which had historically constrained artistic innovation, and they very quickly proved unsustainable.

Opera in Crisis and the Roots of Monopoly

For one month after the destruction of Her Majesty's Theatre, theatre professionals speculated furiously about the future of the site and revived the first murmurs of opera monopoly since Gye's failed attempt to form a limited company in 1865. Mapleson suffered a stunning property loss of £12,000 (mostly costumes and music), for which he was completely uninsured.⁴ Prominent patrons quickly assisted with relief funds; but with no security, no property and little money, Mapleson once again faced the prospect of having a troupe but no venue for the approaching season.⁵ He promptly arranged to rent Drury Lane but, as a more permanent solution, he encouraged the reconstruction of

⁴ *MM*, 72-74; *Times*, 9 December 1867.

⁵ The Duke of Newcastle founded the Mapleson property relief fund and the Chappell brothers and several leading singers in the troupe founded a second fund for the orchestra, chorus and theatrical employees. It is curious that of the £1,625 subscribed to Mapleson's personal fund, £328 came from leading newspapers and £300 from Miss Burdett Coutts of Gye's bank Coutts & Co. (*Times*, 12 December 1868 to 28 March 1869).

Her Majesty's, a proposition beset with complications. The lessee of the Crown property, a Mr. Martelli, was not required to rebuild a theatre, but if he so decided, the Earl of Dudley, who had 25 years remaining on the sublease he had bought from Lumley, was bound to construct it; and if Dudley did rebuild, Mapleson still had two years unexpired in his sublet agreement.⁶ Dudley had little desire to construct another theatre, however. He particularly dreaded the prospect of another opera house—he often stated to Gye that he 'was quite convinced that 2 operas could not pay'—and decided that he would sell his lease rather than build a theatre.⁷ Mapleson allegedly offered £40,000 for the lease, although it is unclear whether or not he had access to such sums. The bookseller and sometime impresario John Mitchell also expressed interest in the site.⁸

All the while, Gye negotiated his own set of agreements with each of the interested parties, a tactic which hedged the uncertainty of the moment. He lobbied Martelli to use the site for a post office, hotel or private club but arranged with Dudley that if a new theatre were in fact built, they would jointly close either that theatre or Covent Garden to opera.⁹ Yet Gye hardly commanded the strength to fulfill his monopolistic aspirations in early 1868. As seen in chapter 3, after 3½ prosperous years and good relations with his creditors, his theatre had recently suffered unprecedented failure and his finances hit new lows. He told his bank, 'I had received more than £2,700 less from the theatre since the opera season than I had done these last two years in the corresponding period - I wished the payment of the Trustees Interest to be put off until May-- but Mr C[oulthurst] said no.'¹⁰ The Coutts ledgers confirm a dire situation: from November 1867 until the end of February 1868, he did not realize any income. Whether or not he had adequate

⁶ See GD, 10-15 January 1868, *Times*, 6 March 1869, and Grüneisen, 35 for this complicated set of relationships.

⁷ GD, 28 and 30 April 1868.

⁸ GD, 13 January and 5 February 1868.

⁹ GD, 11 to 14 January 1868.

¹⁰ GD, 13 January 1868.

resources, Gye had to consider how to get Her Majesty's into his hands; the pressure to create a more secure and profitable operation was acute.

On 18 January 1868, a perfect opportunity presented itself. A Mr. Wagstaff, director of the Mortgage Assurance Corporation and a wealthy backer of Mapleson, told Gye that he had agreed to advance Mapleson £100,000 to build a new theatre. Gye 'convinced him of the utter folly of building another theater and said I was sure that...a Company would be much more easily formed for one opera, than for a new house to fight Covent Garden.' Specifically, he suggested that Wagstaff back a company which would buy the Royal Italian Opera from him, install Mapleson as opera manager, purchase the Haymarket site and close it to opera.¹¹ Gye's decision to sell the opera concern rather than persevere with his own attempts to form a monopoly has never been fully understood. Mapleson and Rosenthal have passed down a view which takes at face value Gye's explanation in his 1868 prospectus 'that after 19 years of very arduous labour he would have been but too glad to have retired from the direction of the Opera.'¹² The fact that Gye would remain in opera management for another ten years counters this claim; indeed, Gye complained so often about business and his health that one must view his incessant grumblings with circumspection.

Gye's prospectus offers other possible explanations: that the project would have 'produced an immense revenue' and that 'by combining in one establishment the very few great artistes who are now living, both the cause of art as well as the interests of the public would have been better served.'¹³ These are credible reasons. The notion of 'serving the art form' did not mean an expansion in the range of operatic styles or a

¹¹ The proposal was accepted at a price of £270,000: £112,000, the amount of the original contributors' funds, to remain on mortgage; £98,000 cash and £20,000 in shares to Gye, representing principally the investment in plant and properties which Gye had amassed in the preceding ten years; £25,000 to Wagstaff for promoting the scheme; and £15,000 to Mapleson to enable him to clear engagements and commitments already made, as well as an annual salary of £3,000 as manager (GD, 18 to 23 January 1868). This account corrects the one provided in Rosenthal, *Two Centuries*, 151-52, based upon *MM*, 74-6, which cites Wagstaff, not Gye, as the originator of the scheme.

¹² Royal Italian Opera Prospectus, *Times*, 21 March 1868.

¹³ Royal Italian Opera Prospectus, *Times*, 21 March 1868.

commitment to greater compositional integrity, as it might in a modern context; it connoted the presentation of a variety of works from the repertoire in high quality performances. Gye maintained that a single opera company would yield stronger casts and facilitate strict regulation of singer salaries and requests, enabling greater investment in productions and operational stability. The press, however, challenged this assumption, noting that so long as London managers continued to compete with other international opera centres, singers would be able to dictate their terms.¹⁴

The most compelling reason for the scheme was that it would, as Gye put it, produce an immense revenue. Still, even this explanation provides no indication why Gye would sell his company rather than pursue a lucrative monopoly himself. A conversation between Gye and an officer of Coutts & Co. after this sale may provide some insight:

I told him I had sold the R.I.O. concern...but that I should not get much out of it - I said I knew that one opera would be an income of £20,000 a year but that having an offer which would enable me to pay Messrs Coutts all I owed them & feeling how deeply he (Mr R[obinson]) and Mr Coulthurst had, in a manner, compromised themselves to serve me I had accepted it-- rather, also, than to place any difficulty in the way of the sale I had given up the managership of £2,000 a year - I said I should be very grateful if Mr Coulthurst could do anything for me in getting the back interest on the mortgages given up.¹⁵

This treachy account may have been little more than Gye's attempt to ingratiate himself to the bank in return for past and future favours. Nevertheless, it offers an explanation consistent with Gye's characteristic prudence and pragmatism. He had by this time clearly exhausted the bank's patience. It was probably more advantageous to accept a firm offer which relieved him of outstanding debts and provided surplus funds, than to risk forming a monopoly, a tenuous prospect which, even if successful, would have to run many years before he could clear his debts.

¹⁴ See *Morning Post* opinion, reproduced in *Express and Times*, 28 February 1868; Grüneisen, 34.

¹⁵ GD, 1 February 1868; see also 25 January 1868.

Plans for the Grand Opera Limited, as it was styled, had to proceed at a frantic pace in order to secure funding by the beginning of the 1868 opera season, only two months away. Apparently, Gye had never met his rival before and agreed to do so only if Mapleson could satisfactorily explain the libellous affidavit he had made in the Graziani case nine years earlier. After their first meeting, Gye retained serious misgivings about their association: 'I was not at all pleased with my interview with Mapleson yesterday - he seems a good natured but a wild harem scarem fellow and I fear the character which I have heard of him is a true one viz: that his word is not in the least to be depended on.'¹⁶ Wealthy opera supporters' subscriptions to the company seemed to come in quickly, but one month before the opera season, Wagstaff's project collapsed.¹⁷ Gye's dire circumstances had led him to enter into the agreement hastily; throughout the dealings, his most trusted advisers brought unfavourable reports about Wagstaff and his business, which Gye ignored.¹⁸ Still, this episode was not without long-term benefits, for it brought Mapleson and Gye together for the first time. As the deal unravelled, they explored the possibility of working together without the formation of a holding company:

[Mapleson's] idea appeared to be to put his troupe & mine together & to have the opera at Covent Garden, meaning that it should be a sort of partnership concern-- but of course I knew that would never do-- & I said the only [way]...would be for me to take 3 or 4 of his principal singers & to pay him a sum of money to include some remuneration to himself-- he then to have no opera at Drury Lane or in London, but to use the remainder of his people in the country and in concerts....We talked of combining the two opera interests for the future after this season....He is very wild in all his ideas and plans.¹⁹

¹⁶ GD, 6 February 1868.

¹⁷ Despite Wagstaff's assurances that ample money had been subscribed, it appears as if this was not the case. Nor had Wagstaff secured Her Majesty's Theatre, a key component of the deal (GD, 3 and 6 March 1868).

¹⁸ GD, 5 February and 3 March 1868.

¹⁹ GD, 9 March 1868.

Given this co-operative ethos, it is revealing that the managers gave no consideration to re-organizing lyric institutions in London along programmatic lines or in other ways which might have at once enabled co-existence and expanded the opera repertoire. Ultimately, the managers could reach no agreement and entered into competition once more. Gye's disappointment at the turn of events was palpable: 'The first night of the season-- and I again at work-- when I had thought I had got rid of the dreadful business of Opera management!!!'²⁰

Monopoly Formed

In characteristic fashion, Mapleson responded to unfavourable circumstances and defied expectations by launching a bold venture at his new home, Drury Lane. Reinventing his company as 'Her Majesty's Opera'—a suspect name, since his troupe had no royal charter—Mapleson marshalled a show of strength, introducing six operas in only the first two weeks of the season and thirteen by mid-May.²¹ The magnitude of this achievement is only slightly diminished when one considers that he did not create all the costumes and scenery for each opera given but 'used the Drury Lane stock.'²² Mapleson needed to commission some production materials but did so frugally because the theatre lay claim to it, a standard arrangement:

I paid at Drury-Lane £250 a week, with the right of adding as much as I pleased to the stock of scenery and costumes belonging to the theatre, but with no right to take anything out. Thus, my tenancy being only a temporary one, it could not suit me to mount grand operas in the style in

²⁰ GD, 31 March 1868.

²¹ Gye brought the questionable name to the attention of the Queen's courtiers and the Lord Chamberlain in 1871 (GD, 16 and 24 March), and attacked Mapleson for it in a public forum in 1877 (*Times*, 21 September).

²² GD, 30 April 1870. Orchestral and vocal parts would likely have been easy for him to obtain since his family still controlled a leading music library. Contrary to the newspaper reports that the fire at Her Majesty's destroyed everything, Santley reveals that his personal wardrobe, stored at the theatre, was spared (*Student and Singer*, 279). It is therefore possible that not all materials had been lost.

which I should mount them at a theatre placed permanently under my direction.²³

This circumstance, combined with his frenetic level of activity, reinforced Mapleson's past programming patterns (table 5). As with his previous 'first seasons' at the Lyceum and Her Majesty's, Mapleson drew from the core Italian works which placed least demand upon *mise-en-scène* and casting (*Lucrezia Borgia*, *Semiramide*, *Traviata*, *Trovatore*, *Linda*, *Figaro* and *Rigoletto*). That 77% of Mapleson's performances came from the Italian repertoire—the most Italianate season under his management—also reflected his boon of the day's two leading coloraturists, Christine Nilsson and Clara Kellogg. Curiously, Mapleson put two 'new' works into rehearsal: *Lohengrin* and Auber's *Gustavus III*. He may have recognized the growing enthusiasm in London for Wagner's music, for selections from *Rienzi* and, particularly, *Lohengrin* and *Tannhäuser* were increasingly featured in orchestra concerts, part of an overarching movement towards the programming of a wider range of German composers including Schumann and Schubert.²⁴ Just a week before Mapleson's season opened, a band performed the Bridal March at a royal family dinner, perhaps the surest sign of approbation for the composer's music.²⁵ No evidence suggests why Mapleson pulled both these novelties from rehearsals that year.²⁶

The performances were not of very high quality; *The Times* demurred from criticizing them on the basis that Mapleson laboured under unfavourable circumstances.²⁷

Nevertheless, Mapleson later reported to Gye an exceptional box office: £17,000 in

²³ Mapleson letter to *Times*, 4 August 1877.

²⁴ *Times*, 12 April 1869.

²⁵ *Times*, 20 March 1868.

²⁶ Even Santley, who portrayed Friedrich, did not know why it was dropped after a few rehearsals (*Student and Singer*, 282).

²⁷ *Times*, 19 May 1868.

subscriptions and between £500 and £600 in nightly receipts.²⁸ The claim is suspect, for he would later complain that the theatre, containing fifteen free boxes and 300 places reserved for over 600 renters, hindered financial success.²⁹ Further complicating this issue, Grüneisen reported that Mapleson had better houses than ever, but Joseph Bennett countered that they were terrible.³⁰ No matter how successful his season, though, Mapleson's own comments about Drury Lane, cited above, reflect his resentment of the constraints which the rental terms imposed. He was also unable to rent the theatre for his autumn season, a further disadvantage.³¹ The spectre of finding a home which allowed him greater autonomy and better return for his investment continued to loom large.

Meanwhile, across Bow Street, a competitive 1868 opera season threw Gye further towards the brink of disaster. Since Gye had been preoccupied with the attempted sale of his company during the winter of 1868, he was unable to travel to the Continent to identify new works until a brief journey to Paris in the middle of March. He announced several novelties in his prospectus—Rossini's *L'assedio di Corinto*, Verdi's *Giovanna d'Arco* and Auber's *Le domino noir*—but the first two of these were not forthcoming and the last, already familiar to English audiences for three decades, was shabbily mounted and derided as 'a dress rehearsal for next season.'³² For the first time, Gye abandoned the introduction of new works altogether, opting instead for the presentation of a great

²⁸ GD, 22 June 1868.

²⁹ *MM*, 76; James Henry Mapleson letter to the *Times*, 17 July 1876. Mapleson may have exaggerated these numbers, but the problem of renters at Drury Lane was severe, and dated from Richard Brinsley Sheridan's reconstruction of the theatre in 1791. In raising capital, Sheridan sold 500 rent charges at £500 each; among other entitlements, purchasers won the right of free admission for the 100-year term of the ground lease. Throughout the 1790s, Sheridan continued to grant the right to free admission. After fire destroyed the theatre in 1809, a new financing agreement protected the rights of the original subscribers; these seem to have been passed down at least through Alfred Bunn's management in the 1840s and likely through Mapleson's (*Survey of London*, 35:17-22).

³⁰ Grüneisen, 34; Bennett, 247.

³¹ Grüneisen, 37.

³² *Giovanna d'Arco* opened at the Théâtre Italien on 28 March with Patti, so Gye did not see it in performance and it is unlikely that he saw it in rehearsal. He most likely abandoned plans to present it after reports that the production had failed. Davison registered his disappointment with the Auber work in *The Times*, 28 July 1868.

variety of works in succession. He did revive a number of French operas unheard for several seasons (*Robert, Fille, Tell*), perhaps a response to Mapleson's Italian programming and poor *mise-en-scène*. None of these programming formulae could remedy his suffering box office. In the month of April, money taken at the door averaged only £82, as compared with £240 in other years. The arrival of Patti signalled the height of the season but income still remained low; as table 9 suggests, houses in 1868 improved for star singers, but were still lower than in other years. By the end of May, Gye's receipts were £2,500 below those of the previous season at a comparable time and, compounding this problem, he had just finished paying £9,000 towards outstanding debts he could not put off any longer. The bank would not lend him anything further for he had no security to offer. Failing to pay Costa and his singers at the end of May, he feared that any one of them could commence bankruptcy proceedings.³³ The several prospects he had developed in early June to extricate himself from his fearsome situation fell apart in a single day which prompted the following diary entry: 'I felt very unwell and remained at home - I wrote to Mapleson about joining the two operas.'³⁴ In the ensuing discussion,

[Mapleson] seemed very much pleased at the idea of joining the Operas-- but he had not yet got a lease of Her Majesty's Theatre - The only plan feasible appeared to be of a partnership between him & me-- the whole of the expenses of both houses, including rent, taxes, insurances, fire & life, interest of money &c being paid out of the receipts and profits divided equally afterwards-- the opera (at all events at the beginning) to be at Covent Garden, & Her Majesty's Theatre when re-built to be let - I proposed that I should take 2/3ds and Mapleson 1/3d of the profits - he wanted an equal division to which I did not make a positive objection.³⁵

³³ GD, 28 May, 11 and 25 June 1868.

³⁴ GD, 19 June 1868.

³⁵ GD, 22 June 1868.

Two days later, when he and Mapleson drafted the terms of agreement, Gye wrote, 'I look on this connection with dread!!'³⁶

Whereas in 1865 and earlier, Gye sought to monopolize opera in London from a position of strength—a 'hostile takeover,' as it were—the actual coalition of 1868 was a merger made out of desperation. Gye believed that Mapleson was critical to his ability to form a monopoly for two reasons. The Earl of Dudley had approved the reconstruction of Her Majesty's Theatre and Gye surmised that Mapleson, whose original sublease through March 1870 still remained in effect, would have a better chance than he to secure a long lease or purchase it outright. He also thought that Mapleson held a long engagement of Christine Nilsson, enabling him to corner definitively the best singers of the day. Apart from the inherent appeal of monopoly—the ability to attract more of the opera-going public and a higher level of bookseller subscriptions—Gye also believed that it would help him to control costs and free himself from the demands of his singers and Costa. He also recognized that he could use the prospect of monopoly to seduce creditors into inaction for another year—or into providing further assistance. Such was the response of Coutts & Co., who lent an additional £13,000, encouraged by the renewed promise of his business.³⁷ Finally, events of the preceding spring had led Gye to believe that he could attract a buyer only by showing two or three years of substantial profits and by controlling both theatres in a monopoly situation. He now viewed a monopoly only as a means to an end.

The Gye diaries completely dispel the romantic notion that the two managers operated in harmony or shared some common purpose to 'inflict a mortal blow on the three supposed adversaries': booksellers, press and singers.³⁸ Their incompatible styles and mutual suspicion were in evidence even during the protracted consolidation of their partnership agreement. Mapleson proved unable to get a long lease of Her Majesty's, as

³⁶ GD, 24 June 1868.

³⁷ Coutts ledgers, 1868; GD, 25 June 1868.

³⁸ Grüneisen, 37. Arditi describes how the two 'clasped hands over a joint enterprise' (180).

he confirmed he could. He settled instead for a lease which had to be renewed annually.³⁹ Gye reviewed the situation with his bankers, telling them he wanted 'a partnership for 3 years, but the drawback to that was that if after next year for which only Mapleson has Her Majesty's Theatre Lord D should dispose of it to other parties I should have the burden of Mapleson at Covent Garden - they thought that for the present it would be enough to arrange with M for three years, but which said [the term] was not at all certain as M was such a slippery fellow.'⁴⁰ The two managers did sign a three-year agreement that autumn, and Gye conveyed the news to the Prince of Wales: 'He asked me how I should like the connection with Mapleson - he said he thought he (M) meant well but he had the reputation of "not sticking to the truth"!'⁴¹ Mapleson had his own concerns about entering into partnership with someone known for his controlling ways; in the attempt to arrange a lease of Her Majesty's, for instance, Gye actually rewrote letters Mapleson had drafted first. Years later, Mapleson alleged that Gye used the monopoly 'to stifle me at his ease.'⁴² With the agreement signed, Mapleson rented the Covent Garden Theatre from Gye for his annual autumn season, and although their alliance remained a secret to the public until the following spring, one of the most incongruous partnerships in the history of opera in London was underway.

Artistic Decisions in the Coalition

The synthesis of two companies into one, unencumbered by a competitor, was a climactic event in the opera industry of mid-nineteenth-century London and deserves special consideration. The artistic developments under this union—the selection of singers, the control reasserted over the orchestra, the allocation of roles, the division of musical

³⁹ GD, 3 to 12 July 1868.

⁴⁰ GD, 22 July 1868.

⁴¹ GD, 6 November 1868. After his bankers, the Prince of Wales was the first person Gye told about significant changes to his management.

⁴² *MM*, 85.

preparation and the repertoire performed—were unique. Although the two managers were to share profits, Gye maintained the upper hand in shaping each of these areas. The two managers began to engage singers for the 1869 season in August 1868, when the partnership was only tentative, and each manager had to seek the other's permission for any engagement. To Gye's frustration, Mapleson was not as aggressive as he about pushing negotiations and contract terms towards closure. The negotiation for Nilsson progressed particularly poorly, a complication which provoked further tension. In fact, Mapleson could not produce her contract until the middle of April of the 1869 season, and even then without the long-term guarantees which Gye required.⁴³

The difficulty most likely stemmed from the need to negotiate with Nilsson's agent, Henry Jarrett, a figure who has lurked at the periphery of this study but deserves greater attention since he emerged as a major power at precisely this time. Originally a horn player with the Royal Italian Opera, Jarrett commanded a formidable knowledge of musicians and singers in several countries. Through the 1860s, he served Mapleson in a variety of ways, most notably as the deputy who would identify and engage new singers for him. Gye had never used his services before, in part because he made engagements himself but also because Jarrett had taken part in a strike of the Royal Italian Opera band in the early 1850s.⁴⁴ In the coalition and in Mapleson's company before, Jarrett took a salary from the theatre and, at the same time, exacted a six percent commission from singers for the opera and concert engagements he booked; by the mid-1870s, this commission was ten percent. It is possible that managers tolerated this conflict of interest because Jarrett could boast a deep friendship with J. W. Davison and other critics; it was widely believed that the artists and institutions associated with Jarrett received favourable notices by this most powerful of all music journalists and his circle.⁴⁵

⁴³ Dideriksen and Ringel, 26-28; GD, 9 April 1869.

⁴⁴ Rosenthal, *Two Centuries*, 167.

⁴⁵ See, for example, the comments of Thomas Chappell (GD, 28 June 1868). Jarrett's letters to Davison in the Davison MS Collection of the British Library attest to their intimacy and lend credence to a spectacular story which most of the music industry bandied about during the 1870s: that Davison and Jarrett shared a mistress who posed as Jarrett's daughter and whom Jarrett used to manipulate the critic for nearly twenty years (See Jarrett letter to Davison, 31 March 1875, fol. 146 and GD, 12 December

Jarrett's ability to extract ever increasing sums for his clients engendered their loyalty to him; his negotiating skill prompted Maurice Strakosch to bestow upon him an epigraphic caveat: 'Directeurs qui allez signer, laissez toute espérance dehors.'⁴⁶

Drawing from both companies with a bias towards Mapleson's star sopranos, Gye and Mapleson succeeded in creating the most formidable artistic roster London had seen in decades (see table 11, Mapleson's singers indicated). Mario and Lucca were notable omissions, but the tenor demanded salary increases beyond what Gye was willing to commit and the soprano, announced in the prospectus, became ill.⁴⁷ As examined in the last chapter, Mapleson's artists were paid substantially less than Gye's, from 20% to 50% less for singers of similar station. Still, with so many soprano stars, singers' salaries cost £3,700 more than the previous Royal Italian Opera season, or, in proportional terms, an additional 3% of budgeted expenses.⁴⁸ It is imprecise to conclude that monopoly failed to contain singers' salaries, though; the coalition was not publicly announced until 23 February 1869, and contract negotiations were therefore conducted under typical competitive conditions.

The engagements of conductor, orchestra and chorus were more turbulent. At the end of November 1868, Mapleson and Gye agreed to engage Costa and allow him to choose the best men from the two orchestras or to bring in any outsiders. It is clear, however, that Gye viewed the new structure of the Royal Italian Opera as an opportunity to regain control over his band and chorus. A standoff between Gye and Costa had been brewing well before the 1868 season began. One point of contention was Costa's control over musicians' salaries. Apparently, he pegged a fixed salary to each instrumental

1875). Most damaging against Davison's integrity was a series of letters printed in *Truth* in 1877 and 1878 which accused Davison of corruption and subservience to Jarrett in a wider public forum. Davison brought a libel suit against the paper and was cleared of the charges (Charles Reid, *The Music Monster, A Biography of James William Davison* [London: Quartet Books, 1984], 122-26). The evidence, however, leaves little doubt about their collusion.

⁴⁶ 'Abandon all hope, ye directors who sign,' (Strakosch, 163).

⁴⁷ GD, 8 August to 3 September 1868; *Illustrated London News*, 30 July 1869.

⁴⁸ Coutts ledgers, 1869.

position, without regard to ability or length of time with the company, an arrangement which jeopardized Gye's attempts to reduce expenses during his fiscal crisis of the mid-1860s. In 1866, Gye did get each musician to agree, 'In order to lend his aid in carrying on the Establishment of the Royal Italian Opera, Mr. _____ consents to give up his Salary for One Night in every Eight during the Season.'⁴⁹ For the 1867 season, Gye tried to reduce musicians' salaries further, but the band, with the support of Costa, collectively rejected the manager's wish. Salary remained a divisive issue through the 1868 season: 'Costa came and we talked about the enormous expenses of the theatre - he allowed the singers were too highly paid but the moment I touched upon the orchestra he as usual opposed any reduction - I said things could not go on as they are.'⁵⁰ The ledgers reveal that whereas payments to the 87 members of the orchestra comprised between 12% and 13% of the opera budget from 1861 through 1867, they consumed 15% in 1868.⁵¹ Gye seemed to have more success in reducing his payments to the chorus. He told Costa in 1867, 'My expenses will this season be too great to afford any extra chorus therefore please [try] not to engage any more than the number we used to have before we had the extra people these last 2 or 3 years.'⁵²

Costa had won several new powers beginning in 1867 which cemented his autonomy over the company's musical activities and personnel.⁵³ Two new clauses in his contract

⁴⁹ Gye contract with orchestra, Item 22 in MC Papers. It is entirely possible that Gye made this arrangement once before years earlier as a letter from 1854 suggests (Item 3 in MC Papers).

⁵⁰ GD, 8 July 1868.

⁵¹ The total for orchestra salaries remained unchanged from the previous year, £6,900. This represented a larger proportion of the total budget because Gye reduced other costs. Little is known about the salaries of individual musicians in the orchestra in the 1860s. A pay list entitled *Royal Italian Opera Covent Garden Salaries of Members of the Orchestra 1874 5* (ROHA) gives seasonal disbursements to members of the string sections. Apparently, there were three levels with some deviations: £57 8s, £65 12s and £71 15s. Principals were paid substantially more. Carrodus, the leader, earned £172 4s and Betjemann, the principal second violin and leader of the ballet, earned £229 19s. These payment structures and orchestral practices will be the subject of future ongoing research as part of the European Science Foundation Workshop on Nineteenth-Century Opera House Orchestras.

⁵² Gye letter to Costa, 31 January 1867, Item 23 in MC Papers.

⁵³ The contracts in the ROHA collection of MC Papers are dated as follows: 28 May 1858 (for the 1858 season); 12 August 1863 (for 1864, with emendations for 1865 and 1866); and 7 January 1867 (for 1867, with emendations for 1868). The first contract has Gye's signature, the second both Gye and

stipulated 'Mr Costa is to have the exclusive choice of the Maestro al Piano the chorus Master and the Librarian Copyist for the season and neither of such employees shall be removed from his office without Mr Costa's approval' and 'No person shall be present in the room during the pianoforte rehearsals other than the artistes actually engaged therein.' A third clause said that engagements of the orchestra and chorus 'shall be on the same terms & conditions as last season except that the engagements for the members of the Orchestra shall contain certain provisions that they shall be at liberty to attend musical festivals.' Costa's acceptance of outside concerts in preference to opera rehearsals plagued Gye more than ever during the 1868 season. A Handel Festival at the Crystal Palace featuring Costa and the Royal Italian Opera orchestra stole the conductor away for nearly two weeks of the season, provoking Gye's exclamation, 'Shameful!' He alleged that Costa's behaviour once again jeopardized the production of new operas.⁵⁴

When Gye informed Costa of the proposed arrangements for the 1869 coalition, then, his agenda differed from the one he and Mapleson had discussed. He told Costa 'that there would be 2 conductors, he the head and Ardit (most likely the other) that we could choose the band from both orchestras but that the musicians must be at the service of the theatre when wanted and not be subject to Exeter Hall.'⁵⁵ Costa rejected this plan, reasserting his right to administer complete control:

The Director of the music, the conductor and the Superintendent of the *mise-en-scène* is clearly responsible for the efficiency of the performances, and provided he is capable of undertaking the office, it is out of all reason that he should be interfered with or subject to the control of others in the exercise of his functions...Hence it is that I have always stipulated for, and had conceded to me, the free selection and uncontrolled direction of both [orchestra and chorus], and the exercise of this authority I cannot think of dispensing with....[A]s I have over and over again told you, it is contrary

Costa's. The last bears neither signature, but the fact that emendations for the 1868 season were added in pencil suggests that the agreement was at least valid for the 1867 season.

⁵⁴ GD, 29 May to 15 June 1868.

⁵⁵ GD, 2 January 1869. Contrary to what other observers have suggested, Gye did not intend to dismiss Costa (Grüneisen, 43; Wyndham, 256-57). Rather, he wanted Costa to accept his reforms, but he was prepared to force a standoff which, he seemed to realize, might have severe repercussions.

to all principle to expect that the same orchestra and chorus can be efficiently led by two independent conductors, and I have illustrated this view, as you know, by the observation that as well might it be expected that a clock should go with two springs or a battalion be commanded by two colonels.⁵⁶

In a strongly worded response, Gye itemized each of the complaints about Costa's control discussed so far in this study (Appendix E). Meanwhile, Gye arranged with Li Calsi, his longtime *maestro al piano*, to assume conducting responsibilities should he discharge Costa. Two days later, Gye recorded in his diaries that he wrote to Costa that 'I could not commit to him the uncontrolled power he sought and that I was obliged to sever a connection which had existed so many years.'⁵⁷ After what was clearly a dismissal, Costa spread word that he had rejected Gye's unattractive offer, the account which has come down to the present day.⁵⁸

Rid of Costa, Gye set to establish new working practices for the orchestra and chorus. Henry Jarrett advised Gye that all the musicians of the Royal Italian Opera, except for the principal flute and horn, were better than those in Her Majesty's Opera and that their instruments were better as well. A week later, the managers engaged the entire band of the Royal Italian Opera, despite Mapleson's desire to leave a dozen positions open for his own players, at the same salary as the previous year but without the other usual terms.⁵⁹ Six of the musical staff resigned as a consequence of the Costa affair, including Sainton (the leader and deputy conductor), and Smythson (the chorus

⁵⁶ Costa letter to Gye, 27 January 1869, Item 28 in MC Papers.

⁵⁷ GD, 11 February 1869.

⁵⁸ Rosenthal, *Two Centuries*, 163. Grünisen's *Opera and the Press* was in many ways a treatise in support of Costa and helped sway subsequent memoirists and historians. Gye knew that their parting would create a stir so, with characteristic self-righteousness, he printed a copy of his correspondence with Costa. Outraged when the Queen consoled Costa with a knighthood two months later, Gye marched down to Buckingham Palace to present Her Majesty with a copy so that she should know the true story. Always one to hold a grudge, Gye would proffer this correspondence for years to come.

⁵⁹ GD, 22 and 23 February, 1 March 1869. Three members of the orchestra negotiated the contract on behalf of the entire orchestra, although each signed individually.

master).⁶⁰ The co-managers drew choral singers from both companies.⁶¹ Li Calsi and Arditi were appointed as co-directors of the musical forces; neither maestro wanted to share conducting duties but, even after the coalition, Gye would never again allow power to become concentrated in the hands of a single conductor. Jarrett, on behalf of his client Nilsson, also recommended lowering the pitch 'to the normal pitch as now adopted at Paris, Vienna, &c,' but these measures do not seem to have been fully adopted until 1872.⁶²

Despite Gye's dominance in artistic decisions, the assumption of Mapleson's company had tremendous implications for the programming of the Royal Italian Opera: a 20% shift away from the French repertoire towards Italian opera seria and buffa, and the production of classical German works for the first time since the fire of 1856 (table 4). The development of an artistic programme and schedule, a treacherous process before the coalition, now suffered the additional challenge of assimilating partisan loyalties and a greater number of egos. The managers obviously chose the repertoire diplomatically, such that neither Patti, Tietjens nor Nilsson had to cede any of the roles for which they were known in London. This was fairly easy to do, since their styles differed—Patti the soubrette, Nilsson the high coloratura, Tietjens the dramatic soprano—and their roles overlapped rarely. Di Murska was more problematic, since her repertoire overlapped

⁶⁰ The others were Dando (the second chair first violin), Willy (first violin), Weist Hill (principal second violin) and Lazarus (principal clarinet) (*Pall Mall Gazette*, copied in *Times*, 23 March 1869).

⁶¹ GD, 31 January, 8 March 1869.

⁶² GD, 15 February 1869. Shaw relates that, in 1858, the French government had adopted A=435, the recommendation of a commission consisting of Rossini, Berlioz, Meyerbeer, Auber, Halévy and Thomas; Costa, however, 'ordained that, whatever the French might choose to mean by A, the London Philharmonic Society should mean by it a note produced by 452 vibrations per second,' and the Queen decreed that all bands in England adopt the higher pitch (Shaw, *The Dramatic Review*, 27 June 1885, in *Shaw's Music*, 277-80). By the late 1860s, grumbling about this eccentric practice had become widespread, most vociferously by Ellis' Society of Arts. The New Philharmonic Society tried the lower pitch at orchestral concerts in March 1869 and Christine Nilsson wrote a letter to the *Musical Times* in its favour (Scholes, 2:407-8). Music material for *La sonnambula* reveals that 'Ah non credea' was lowered a half tone for Patti in 1867 (vocal score, ROHA). The *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* says that in 1880, Patti successfully campaigned for the company to lower its pitch to the French standard. However, the Gye diaries reveal that the pitch of band instruments and organ was lowered in 1872 (GD, 14 February, 2 March and 13 April 1872). A 'Conference on Musical Pitch' was convened in London in 1885, but it was not until Henry Wood's Promenade Concerts of 1895 that the lower pitch was universally adopted ('Pitch,' *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 14:785).

directly with Nilsson and Patti's; she therefore performed in operas only for the month of April, until those singers arrived. *Prima donna* jealousy may have been contained, but certainly it could not be fully controlled. With reference to the coalition's flagship new work, Thomas' *Hamlet*, a vehicle for Nilsson,

Arditi Harris & Mapleson came to my room about Titiens refusing to sing the part of the Queen in *Hamlet* - Mapleson said it was a 3d rate part & we could not ask her-- but that he had done all he could to induce her - I said the part was sung by Mad Gueymard in Paris, a first rate artiste & that Titiens could not legally refuse....I asked why Titiens did not refuse after hearing the Opera in Paris - M said because an important duet had been cut out - I then said, let it be restored - he said he would see her tonight about it again.⁶³

Tietjens still refused it so Sinico filled the role. The following season, as Tietjens continued to reject the role, Mapleson proposed that one of Gye's leading singers assume a small role in *Medea* as a tradeoff.⁶⁴

Tietjens' abilities and high salary proved a significant source of conflict between the two managers through both years of the coalition: Gye told Mapleson in 1870 'that we disagreed about many things in the management, particularly as to Titiens' engagement - he said she was the greatest artiste of the lot and the mainstay of the theater!! - I said all I looked to was the receipts she brought & they were wretched for a woman receiving £160 per week - He said she could get double elsewhere - I said she had better leave then.'⁶⁵ While salary levels suggest that Patti was the most popular of the company's *prime donne*, Gye's notations of box-office results, though sketchy, tell another story: Nilsson's performances in 1869 averaged £635 at the box office whereas Patti's drew

⁶³ GD, 28 May 1869. The manuscript score and orchestral parts for the Royal Italian Opera *Hamlet* production of 1869, extant in the ROHA stores, reveal that the Queen's music was not cut for the performances in England.

⁶⁴ GD, 14 April 1870. Tietjens ultimately agreed to sing in *Hamlet* that year, without this *quid pro quo*.

⁶⁵ GD, 23 May 1870. Tietjens did not leave.

only £500. Box-office figures are only available for a few of Tietjens' performances during the 1869 and 1870 seasons, all much lower: £253, £275 and £170.⁶⁶

With two conductors and many of the works common to the repertoires of both companies, issues of artistic preparation presented the managers with unprecedented problems. Perhaps the most efficient approach in a company of this nature would have been for Li Calsi to conduct 'Gye's singers' in the French works and for Arditi to conduct 'Mapleson's singers' in the classical works, with the Italian repertoire divided between the two. In practice, Li Calsi led all of the Italian *opera buffa* and *seria* except for *Norma* and *Sonnambula* while Arditi directed the music for all the *grands opéras*—a curious arrangement, given the relative strengths of the former companies, but one which the substantial difference in their conducting experience and ability explains.⁶⁷ Impressively, over two-thirds of the works presented brought together the principal singers of both companies though it is certainly interesting to note that Tietjens sang exclusively and Nilsson primarily with Arditi.

Evidence in the Royal Opera House Archives suggests that productions unique to the Royal Italian Opera or common to both companies before the coalition used Gye's music materials. Some question remains as to which materials Arditi used for those operas which only Her Majesty's Opera had performed or for which it was more renowned. Take *Fidelio*, for example, an opera which Gye had not presented since 1860 but which Mapleson gave every season since 1864 as a showcase for Tietjens. Whose performance materials did the coalition use? It is unlikely that Mapleson transferred parts from Drury Lane. It is possible, though, that Arditi and Mapleson's leading singers brought with them their own conductor's score and vocal scores, which house copyists then used to reproduce orchestral and choral parts. A printed vocal score with French and Italian texts for the part of Pizarro in *Fidelio* housed in the Royal Opera House Archives

⁶⁶ Sample sizes (five figures for Nilsson and eight for Patti) are too small to form strong conclusions.

⁶⁷ Davison found Li Calsi to be 'comparatively incapable' and denigrated his musicianship throughout the season (*Times*, 5 April, 19 and 26 July 1869).

supports this hypothesis. The cover (verso) reads 'RIO C Garden' and the page opposite (1 recto) notes 'Sigr Cotogni,' suggesting the score belonged to the Royal Italian Opera by 1875, the year he assumed the role. Crossed out underneath Cotogni's name, however, are the words 'propriété de S. Gassier Londres 1864,' linking the score to the Her Majesty's production of that year. Gassier was never a part of the coalition, but Charles Santley, who inherited the role at Her Majesty's in 1865, was; he sang *Pizarro* at the Royal Italian Opera in 1869. He may have kept his music privately outside of the theatre, or else the 1867 fire at Her Majesty's spared it.⁶⁸ In either case, he served as an agent for transferring musical material from Mapleson's company to Gye's. When one considers further that the manuscript recitatives inserted into this vocal score are the same as those found in the full score and *suggeritore* score of the *Fidelio* performance materials, it seems very likely that the version performed at the Royal Italian Opera in 1869 was that of Her Majesty's Opera.⁶⁹

As discussed earlier, Mapleson did not bring to the Royal Italian Opera the costumes and scenery which he had recreated at Drury Lane the previous season.⁷⁰ Gye and Mapleson therefore invested in new scenery and costumes for *Hamlet* and *Don Bucefalo* as well as the Mapleson staple not yet produced at the Royal Italian Opera since the fire of 1856, *Die Zauberflöte*. These new productions became property of Covent Garden and therefore enabled Gye to produce these works after the partnership was annulled. It is possible that production quality created tension between the two managers and among the *prime donne*. Many decades later, Mapleson's son recalled 'Harris senior gave the best scenery, costumes etc when Patti sang & when Titiens Nilsson & others of my

⁶⁸ Santley relates in *Student and Singer* that his wardrobe survived (279), and perhaps his music did as well.

⁶⁹ The orchestra parts to *Der Freischütz* (ROHA) also suggest an origin in Mapleson's company, though not so directly. The Royal Italian Opera did not recreate the work until 1872. However, several of the second violin parts date from 1871, the year in which Mapleson presented the work at Covent Garden as part of his autumn season. Cuts and markings in these parts correspond to those in the full score used at Covent Garden in 1879, suggesting that the Royal Italian Opera may have copied or taken outright some of Mapleson's performance materials.

⁷⁰ The Gye diaries reveal that Mapleson stored 'a lot of his own properties' in the Floral Hall, although it is unclear what is meant—perhaps movable props.

father's artistes sang the scenery & costumes were simply disgraceful. These & other constant pin-pricks made my father's life a burden.⁷¹ The assertion is somewhat confusing. The scenery and costumes used for a particular opera during the coalition probably would have been the same as Gye had used at the Royal Italian Opera for the previous ten years, regardless of singer. The statement could refer to the subset of scenery and costumes which several operas used interchangeably. The inventory of properties and costumes at Her Majesty's Theatre prepared a decade later supports this proposition; many items are listed as belonging to 'various' operas, such as '61 Monks cords crosses & beads' or a 'wood table'.⁷² It is therefore plausible that Harris demonstrated a bias towards the singers he had worked with for a long time and assigned the nicest of the common properties and costumes to Patti's operas. Alternatively, it is possible that the properties used in Patti's operas were truly the best in the stores because Gye had continually maintained them in fresh condition, but invested less in refurbishing other works in the repertoire, which Tietjens and Nilsson inherited in 1869.⁷³

Although the managers selected works from the repertoires of both companies, the scheduling of the opera season followed Gye's past practices. They filled the month of April with two of Mapleson's classical mainstays, *Fidelio* and *Die Zauberflöte*, and many of the works which typically served as season beginners for the Royal Italian Opera: *Huguenots*, *Tell* and *Robert*; *Rigoletto* and *Trovatore*; *Norma* and *Puritani*. Significantly, these operas were cast almost entirely from the ranks of Mapleson's singers, since most of Gye's singers did not arrive until May.⁷⁴ The managers sustained interest during this month by relying on the star appeal of Tietjens and di Murska, who appeared in all but two performances and frequently performed together. Once Nilsson

⁷¹ Henry Mapleson letter to Richard Northcott, 29 August 1925, James Henry Mapleson Papers.

⁷² *An Inventory of the Operatic Wardrobe including the Armoury & Music Library at Her Majesty's Theatre Haymarket SW (1880-81)*, Barclay's Records Services.

⁷³ A further possibility—that the Patti productions would have been more lavish because created for her—has been considered but discounted; most of the works in which she appeared were first produced before her début in 1861.

⁷⁴ The exceptions were the soprano Vanzini and the basses Bagagiolo and Tagliafico.

and Patti arrived in May, di Murska and Tietjens were marginalized, consigned primarily to the substantial concert activity outside of the opera house which Henry Jarrett generated almost entirely for Mapleson's singers.⁷⁵ Apart from four performances of Meyerbeer works which featured Tietjens and two performances of Cagnoni's *Don Bucefalo*, every opera night from 15 May until the end of the season featured Patti or Nilsson, usually in alternation. As in years past, *Don Giovanni* and *Faust* appeared once per week, as did *Lucia*. *Hamlet* appeared in semi-stagione format, as did most of the works which featured Patti (*Barbiere*, *La gazza ladra*, *Sonnambula*). *La fille du régiment*, *Don Pasquale*, *Martha* and *Traviata* appeared only sporadically. Altogether, 25 operas were presented, more than ever before.

Chapters 3 and 4 established that Gye and Mapleson were committed to novelty but that the demands of a competitive opera environment discouraged experimentation. Monopoly did not reverse the programming trends of the 1860s, indeed, it replicated and even exaggerated established patterns. The managers did mount two works previously unknown in London, but even these were little more than inducements to attract particular star singers, rather than efforts to vitalize the repertoire. The only plausible explanation for Gye and Mapleson's decision to stage *Don Bucefalo*, an opera over two decades old which had enjoyed some success in Italy but few other opera centres, is that they used it as a concession to win the commitment of the *basso buffo* Alessandro Bottero.⁷⁶ They abandoned it after its complete failure. A greater amount of evidence reveals that the managers did not believe in *Hamlet's* chances of success—Gye lamented

⁷⁵ A letter from Gye to Francis Knollys during the Gye-Mapleson coalition reads, 'I am not aware of Madlle Nilsson's concert engagements indeed by her contract we have no power over her as to them,' a sure indication that Jarrett had the ability to negotiate concerts for Mapleson's singers in the coalition (17 June 1869, Royal Archives, 1f-4f).

⁷⁶ Cagnoni's opera had travelled out of Italy to the Théâtre Italien in 1865 for Bottero, where it was received coolly. Gye and Mapleson could not have seen that production; it is possible that Harris saw rehearsals of it in St. Petersburg in the autumn of 1868. Mapleson may have been familiar with it because Frederic Beale presented it on a provincial tour in the early 1860s (Beale, *Impresario*, 248). It is clear that after the loss of Tagliafico for the 1869 season, Mapleson and Gye were desperate for a comic bass to support Patti in her *opera buffa* roles since they paid Bottero £220 per month, over twice as much as any other bass. It is possible that as further incentive to lure him, they agreed to present what had become his flagship role, *Don Bucefalo*. ('Cagnoni,' *New Grove Opera*, 1:679; Lowenberg, 438; Grüneisen, 62; Coutts ledgers, 1868).

'the opera is very heavy' and Thomas' 'happy ending' in which Hamlet lives and takes the throne was problematic for an English audience.⁷⁷ The diaries reveal that the managers were coerced into presenting it as a way to secure Nilsson's engagement, still unsigned as the season was about to begin: 'the secret of the matter is that the composer, author & editeur of the Opera of Hamlet are making use of [Nilsson] to get us to give the opera....we still agreed that we should not agree to do Hamlet unless she agreed to give us the option of engaging her for 2 years.'⁷⁸

Had the managers viewed their monopoly as an opportunity to invigorate their static repertoire, they may have chosen to integrate some of the recent musical and theatrical developments in London, notably French operetta. Yet the diaries do not provide any evidence that the two managers so much as considered this genre that year. The silence is perplexing since Gye had been instrumental to the recent Offenbach explosion in London. In the autumn of 1867, after John Russell's concerts had failed at Covent Garden, Gye helped him mount the first English performance of an Offenbach operetta, *La grande duchesse d'Érolstein*.^e He provided Russell with the chorus' costumes from *L'étoile du Nord* and agreed to accept one quarter of the receipts in lieu of rent.⁷⁹ Additionally, nearly all of Gye's key personnel were involved with the production including the director (Harris), military band leader, chorus master, machinist, *costumier* and stage designer.⁸⁰ Its massive success sparked numerous operetta productions at St. George's Opera House and the newly built Crystal Palace Theatre in the following months.⁸¹ The genre seemed to appeal particularly to the audiences which attended

⁷⁷ GD, 19 May 1870. The managers commissioned a tragic ending from Thomas, commonly known now as the 'Covent Garden ending.' In the ROHA music stores, the full score and strings parts have the new ending pasted in after the original ending, written in what appears to be a copyist's hand. The prompter's copy of the score and the libretto reveals that the opera ended with Ophélie's mad scene. A review in *The Times* confirms 'the performance terminated with the mad scene, to the general satisfaction' (28 June 1869).

⁷⁸ GD, 22 March 1869; see also 11 March. The editor in question was Heugel.

⁷⁹ GD, 11 October and 3 December 1867.

⁸⁰ *Times*, 14 November 1867.

⁸¹ Musgrave, 173-8; *Times*, 1868 and 1869.

Italian opera; *The Times* noted, 'However opinions may differ as to the merits of M Offenbach's music, there is no doubt that "offenbachism" is one of the "rages" of the day, especially, but by no means exclusively, among the more fashionable classes.'⁸² Even the Prince of Wales attended. The furor over Offenbach continued during the summer of 1869 as Raphael Félix presented *Grand duchesse*, *Barbe Bleu* and *Orphée aux Enfers* in succession at the St. James Theatre with an all French cast led by Hortense Schneider. If the managers ever discussed the production of operetta, they probably dismissed it on aesthetic grounds, given Gye's limited definition of Italian opera and Mapleson's particular aversion to Offenbach's works.⁸³

The monopoly's failure to reverse artistic ossification does not necessarily force a return to Shaw's claim that the managers' artistic policies were fundamentally hopeless. Very little had changed operationally in the coalition. The monopoly, born in secrecy, had the same look and feel of the Royal Italian Opera of years past, and relationships with singers, booksellers and foreign publishers remained unchanged. Preparations for the coalition and extensive autumn and winter tours had prevented both Gye and Mapleson from continental travels so they had not identified any new singers or works. As we have seen, the monopoly grew out of the most conservative of impulses and, as a medium for maximizing profits, was a platform for minimizing all artistic risk. As the season unfolded, pitfalls plagued the seamless programming of the young enterprise. True, unencumbered by a competing concern, Gye and Mapleson enjoyed the ability to plan works and casts further in advance than ever before—an average of eleven days (table 13). Nevertheless, a monopolistic environment hardly reduced the amount of turmoil involved with scheduling operas and there were 21 changes out of 80 performances, more than any other season. Eight of these changes came as a result of a work not being ready, a by-product of singers, orchestra and chorus having to learn works from the other company's repertoire, not to mention the loss of Costa; six changes

⁸² *Times*, 10 June 1869.

⁸³ Cf. chapter 4, page 141.

were made to accommodate the requests of the Prince of Wales; and four allowed Patti to recover from indisposition.⁸⁴

Alongside the managers' inability to break from conventional practices, the public began to view the rotation of a handful of stars in a wide variety of popular works—the principle Gye began to follow in 1868—as attractive on its own terms, an acceptable substitute for the programming of new works. One begins to detect this change in sentiment in the reviews of the late 1860s:

About this period of the year we are accustomed to expect little novelty at the opera.... That, for the most part, amateurs are sufficiently well entertained, is true; for, while on certain nights they may hear Madame Adelina Patti in her most admired characters, and on other Mdlle. Christine Nilsson in hers, the consideration of minor questions is put aside; and, not, to speak of occasional shortcomings in the general *ensemble*, of the almost still less total absence of novelty, few complaints are audibly uttered. Such is the spell exercised by youth, genius, and agreeable personal qualifications combined.⁸⁵

The impetus to produce new works, an argument so forcefully propounded several years earlier, is cast aside here as a 'minor question.' It is possible that with the expansion of light opera and German concert music, novelty was provided in other quarters and the Italian opera companies were absolved of that responsibility.

One prediction for the coalition did come true: the venture realized tremendous profits. This success is worth examining, for no manager would ever have divined that operating costs would increase so substantially in a monopoly (see financial statements, table 6). The abundance of leading sopranos drove up artistic costs, and sundry expenses rose a substantial £5,200 from the year before, primarily because the managers created

⁸⁴ GD, 3 May 1869.

⁸⁵ *Times*, 14 June 1869.

three new productions.⁸⁶ Duplication in some personnel such as box-office and deputy managers, and a change in accounting practices also contributed to this increase.⁸⁷

These significant cost increases were offset by even more phenomenal growth in income. In the *Memoirs*, Mapleson gives a figure of £80,000, made up of £29,000 in bookseller subscriptions, £12,000 in private subscriptions, £29,000 in box-office income and £10,000 in income from concerts.⁸⁸ Seat price changes do not explain the jump in revenues; except for a slight rise in the second row of amphitheatre stalls, prices remained the same.⁸⁹ If Mapleson's breakdown is accurate, then most of the growth appears to have come in subscriptions and concerts, with nightly box-office receipts at a level comparable with other years.⁹⁰ Gye would disclose later that year to a potential competitor 'that with all our attraction this season and with only playing 4 sometimes 5 nights per week the house had not been absolutely full 3 times in the whole season....I told him that there would be a gross profit in the 17 weeks of the present season without reckoning anything for rent, boxes, or interest of money of about £26,000.'⁹¹ The Coutts ledgers support the gross profit he cites, nearly three times the average for the previous five years. However, houses were certainly not sold out every night, as the comparison between Patti, Nilsson and Tietjens nights suggested.

⁸⁶ Cf. chapter 4, page 133.

⁸⁷ The Coutts ledgers reveal that Gye and Mapleson used different methods of cost accounting. Mapleson used a variety of categories, which changed year to year, to distinguish salaries of his employees from miscellaneous bills. Gye seemed to collapse all these expenses into 'sundries.' During the coalition, these costs were reallocated across several new categories, which may have included some sundry expenditures previously accounted for in other areas.

⁸⁸ *MM*, 81. Concerts were given in Floral Hall and outside venues.

⁸⁹ Wyndham says they rose from twelve to eighteen guineas for a subscription of 40 nights (258).

⁹⁰ Total subscriptions in other years were £30,000 (GD, 16 May 1873). The box-office figures which Gye provides in the diaries throughout the 1869 season support the claim that they were on par with previous years.

⁹¹ Gye to George Wood, GD, 15 July 1869. Gye was probably overstating his success as a way to deter Wood from establishing competition, yet a gross profit of £26,000 over the operating costs of £53,000 would confirm Mapleson's estimate of £80,000 in revenue. Mapleson's profit figure of £36,000 seems to derive from his inability to remember the costs accurately. The Coutts ledgers for 1869 suggest that Mapleson and Gye's total income was £85,107 but based upon my methodology, it may include some other income sources.

With such formidable profits from the opera season, Gye resumed his payment schedule, and over the course of the year, he paid over £5,000 to the Building Fund contributors and another £5,200 towards financing other opera debts. With apparent confidence about the possibilities to make money from the opera company, he proposed to the contributors a scheme to restructure his debt. Since their rights to the boxes and stalls which Gye had consigned in 1858 were to expire in 1870, Gye proposed 'to liquidate all their claims for principle and interest due by making over to them their boxes and stalls for the whole of my lease with permission to let or sell them.'⁹² Such a transaction would have eradicated a tier of hostile creditors, and more important to Gye at the time, ingratiated him further to his sympathetic but increasingly impatient bankers by prioritizing their debt, now £50,000. As was increasingly his custom, Gye played upon the Trustees' fear of his bankruptcy, emphasizing to each one that if any of his creditors or artists were to take hostile proceedings or render him bankrupt, the Trustees would lose their boxes and their money. Most agreed to the scheme except for Lucas, Meyrick and the Duke of Bedford, whose interests in repossessing Floral Hall dragged this debt restructuring well into 1870.

Despite its astounding financial success, all was not well with the Gye-Mapleson partnership. It is unclear how much money Gye and Mapleson earned as net profit; evidence from the diaries and financial accounts suggests that they made a combined total of nearly £10,000 but that Mapleson withdrew more money more frequently than Gye, a situation which provoked periodic confrontations.⁹³ A second area of conflict was Mapleson's autumn tour of the English provinces which, unusually, lost money. The addition of autumn and winter tours and Mapleson's autumn opera season in London greatly expanded the income base of the opera company by nearly £27,000, yet these

⁹² GD, 15 March 1869 ff.

⁹³ See GD, 24 June, 27 July, 2 August 1869 and 13 February 1870.

activities produced a net loss of £2,000.⁹⁴ To Mapleson's consternation, Gye attributed this loss to the fact that Tietjens was paid too much money and no longer a draw:

Today I again told Mapleson that if we had a tournee next Autumn we aught to engage someone in place of Titiens as she had been for so many years - I said we could have Sessi & must get another - He said that no one would draw but Titiens, neither Patti nor Nilsson-- that Titiens was offered £2,000 per month in America & only stayed in England to please him (Mapleson)!!! I told him he must not tell such things as those to me & that I could not agree to Titiens being engaged.⁹⁵

Another tour led by Mapleson in the winter failed to make money, which Gye attributed to Mapleson's reckless spending.⁹⁶

A third source of conflict was that the most important justification for the coalition—the ability to corner a long lease of Her Majesty's Theatre and close it to opera—continued to proceed poorly. Dudley had commissioned the reconstruction of Her Majesty's at the end of May 1868 and a ten month construction period was projected. When Gye saw the theatre at the end of March 1869, however, he was appalled to discover that it was far from complete and that the plans were entirely inadequate: 'I did not think we could ever use Her Majesty's Theatre as an Opera House - too many property boxes & too small a house.'⁹⁷ Gye promptly instructed the architect what changes were necessary to make it suitable for spoken drama.⁹⁸ Although the setback prevented Mapleson and Gye from using Her Majesty's themselves or letting it for other purposes, they succeeded in keeping Her Majesty's closed to opera for 1869. After a brief hiatus, dissension flared again when Gye discovered that the lease Mapleson

⁹⁴ Coutts ledgers, 1869.

⁹⁵ GD, 5 May 1870; see also 13 and 14 April 1870.

⁹⁶ GD, 14 January, 28 March 1870. Gye had estimated they would make £17,000 from autumn and winter activities but in fact only earned £1,000 (28 February 1870).

⁹⁷ GD, 31 March 1869.

⁹⁸ GD, 3 and 14 April 1869.

had arranged gave Dudley the right to evict them in February 1870.⁹⁹ They began to discuss a new, more binding lease when, all at once, the opera industry was thrown into chaos once more.

Monopoly Challenged

Power in the opera business in London was too diffuse for the mere union of two managers to succeed in dominating the industry for a sustained period. Other theatres, although perhaps not ideally equipped for opera, were available for performances. Booksellers could make more money from two operas and were well-positioned to attempt entertainment ventures of their own; the Chappell concerts and Mitchell's French plays were already established and, throughout the first half of 1869, Mitchell and Wood signalled to Gye and others their interest in opera ventures.¹⁰⁰ Money to start new enterprises was easier to come by than in previous years.¹⁰¹ Mapleson and Gye should have recognized the insecurity of their position in the first season of partnership, especially since a manager who had remained outside of the opera industry the 1860s, E. T. Smith, re-emerged to launch a competitive opera company at the Lyceum. Gye had clearly disregarded the lesson of the 1861 season: that it was no good to attempt a monopoly if there were still singers, musicians and an adequate theatre to be had. Smith's 'New Italian Opera' employed the orchestra and chorus of the former Her Majesty's Opera as well as its former principal singers whom the Royal Italian Opera rejected.¹⁰² This company failed after only four performances and, considering that Gye never acknowledged this enterprise in his diaries, it is likely that Gye and Mapleson never

⁹⁹ GD, 29 May 1869.

¹⁰⁰ GD, 5 December 1868, 3 January, 22 February and 22 June 1869.

¹⁰¹ On 16 July 1869, *The Times* reported that the Bank of England diminished the discount rate from an already low 3.5% to 3%. See front cover of Post Office Book, Coutts & Co. Archives for a newspaper clipping listing average bank rates from 1844 to 1864.

¹⁰² *Times*, 31 March, 24 April and 24 May 1869.

viewed it as a serious threat. Their failure to see that the continued success of opera monopoly demanded not just the absorption of existing competitors, but also the prevention of potential rivals soon came to hurt them.

As it turned out, the managers' most pronounced weaknesses—Mapleson's carelessness and Gye's need for control—combined fatally to put a competitor into business. Mapleson had failed to arrange three-year agreements with his singers as he assured Gye he had done; in theory, a rival impresario could offer these singers better terms. Gye facilitated this event when, in the middle of the 1869 season, he prohibited Henry Jarrett from taking both a salary from the theatre and commissions from the singers who used his agency. He therefore stopped Jarrett's salary, appointed him 'the recognized agent of the theatre' and, that very day, instructed him to engage Nilsson, Santley, Arditi and the chorus for the next season.¹⁰³ Poor diplomacy to be sure, for with his allegiance to the coalition severed, Jarrett engaged the singers for himself. Three weeks later, Gye recorded, 'I have for some time suspected that Jarrett has been a traitor & it appears now almost certain & that while he has been pretending to engage Santley, Arditi, Nilsson & others for us he has been engaging them for some opposition theatre at which they say Wood of Cramer and Co is at the head!'¹⁰⁴ Wood and Jarrett had indeed established an opposition at Drury Lane—a second rate theatre for opera but one which Gye and Mapleson did not take into their calculations—with Arditi, Mapleson's star singers who had sung with the Royal Italian Opera as well as those who had not, and the former orchestra and chorus of Her Majesty's Opera.¹⁰⁵ Gye, as usual, blamed Mapleson for this defection—'he had brought all this ruin on me by deceiving me last year by telling me that he had the right to renew all his engagements for 2 years beyond the present

¹⁰³ GD, 15 June 1869.

¹⁰⁴ GD, 13 July 1869. See also 8 and 14 July.

¹⁰⁵ Specifically, the singers included Nilsson, Mongini, Santley, Gardoni, Foli, Volpini, Bettini, Trebelli and Gassier—the entire nucleus of Her Majesty's Opera, except for Tietjens. Wood and Jarrett had been partners at Drury Lane in the German opera venture of 1854 (Rosenthal, *Two Centuries*, 167; Drury Lane Prospectus, 1854, Mapleson Music Library).

when as it now appears he had not the right to do so in one single instance'—but one cannot overlook Gye's poor treatment of Jarrett.¹⁰⁶

This development provoked a series of attempts to avoid competition which, taken together, demonstrate the elusiveness of sustaining monopoly. Gye's immediate reaction was to impress upon Wood the advantages of one opera:

I placed before him the impossibility of two operas answering-- showing that as no one could carry on a second opera so cheaply as Mapleson & I having the stock of Covent Garden & Her Majesty's Theatre & that if we saw there was a possibility of a second opera paying we should give one at Her Majesty's Theatre....I told Wood that if he likes I would sell him R.I.O. concern for £265,000 but he said he could command no such sum but that from what I had told him he was convinced that the only thing to do was for us to join & have one opera only that he could not be connected with Mapleson - I said if he would pay Mapleson out I would let Wood in and give him 1/3d the profit - We then agreed that the best way would be to let Mapleson be an employee at a good salary (about £2,000 a year) and for him to manage the country business.¹⁰⁷

This echoed the first arrangement Mapleson and Gye had ever discussed: one opera troupe and two managers, dividing London and provincial activities. The problem with reorienting the alliance in this manner was that Mapleson did not particularly want to leave. Nor could Gye simply break their partnership; their three-year agreement imposed a heavy penalty for non-fulfillment and Mapleson was still joint lessee of Her Majesty's. Wood therefore acquiesced and allowed Mapleson to stay. Mapleson, in turn, agreed to split his share of the Royal Italian Opera profits with Wood.¹⁰⁸ It appeared, then, that competition was avoided and the coalition realigned to bring together the leading impresarios, agent and bookseller in London. Such a monopoly would have integrated several factions of the opera industry by bringing under one government the control over

¹⁰⁶ GD, 22 July 1869.

¹⁰⁷ GD, 15 July 1869. See also 16 and 17 July 1869. Since Mapleson resisted, Gye and Wood increased their offer to include a cash payment to Mapleson of £5,000.

¹⁰⁸ GD, 28 July, 2 and 3 August 1869.

three leading London theatres and their respective stocks of scenery, costumes and music (Gye, Mapleson and now Wood); the surest path to identify and engage leading singers (Jarrett); the strongest relationship with local concert presenters (Jarrett) as well as close connections with foreign publishers and composers (Wood); deep experience in and relationships with the bookseller trade, the most important channel for tickets sales (Wood); and influence over the press (Jarrett).

Mapleson again delayed signing the agreement, however, claiming he wanted more money and the lease of Her Majesty's for himself. Wood therefore broke off negotiations.¹⁰⁹ Gye, concerned that Mapleson would not renew their joint lease of Her Majesty's, schemed to obtain the lease for himself: 'I told [Dudley] all about Mapleson's lies & deceptions & that I thought he would not sign the lease of Her Majesty's Theatre.' Dudley replied, 'I tell you as I take your hand that I will give it [to] you, I have taken great interest in your junction of the Operas.'¹¹⁰ Ultimately, Mapleson did sign the joint agreement, but attached conditions. Dudley therefore reassured Gye that the 'arrangement with you will stand good,' and although competition at Drury Lane was likely, Gye at last seemed to hold Covent Garden and Her Majesty's Theatres in his own hands.¹¹¹

In the beginning of November 1869, Wood recommenced discussions of a merger and once again insisted upon Mapleson's ouster. At the same time, Mapleson revealed to Gye the groundwork of a remarkable coup, 'viz: that Wood and Jarrett wanted him [Mapleson] to join them and throw me over.' Gye reported further details of this intricate plot in his diary:

This negotiation appeared to have begun a day or two after my last interview with Wood in August - Mapleson told me today that he never intended to join Wood but only led him on to make them delay their engagements but I know that is a lie, the real cause of their failure was my

¹⁰⁹ GD, 11 and 14 August 1869.

¹¹⁰ GD, 13 August 1869.

¹¹¹ GD, 7 September 1869.

having got the agreement from Lord Dudley for the lease of Her Majesty's Theatre to myself alone, which of course upset all their plans - The plot was for Mapleson to give me notice to put an end to our partnership on the plan that I had made engagements without his written consent - he was not to sign the joint lease offered us to Lord Dudley and then to let Wood have the theatre for the autumn performances & it was for this reason that he did not let the Theatre to [another impresario].... Mapleson now pretends that he never meant to leave me....A very pretty plot - To day Mapleson agreed to leave the concern if I could settle with Wood, on being paid £4,000 & a yearly salary of £2,000 to manage the tournée with an additional payment of 15 per cent on the profits of the tournée.¹¹²

This episode represented impresario double dealing at its most notorious. The plot failed not only because of the schemers' inability to get Her Majesty's out of Gye's hands, but also because of a rift between Jarrett and Wood. Jarrett had apparently engaged the singers to himself, not to Wood, to perform specifically at Drury Lane; in this sense, Wood was very much Jarrett's pawn. Fearing for his own security, Wood attempted to join with Gye and take action against Jarrett to cede his singers.¹¹³

Over the next two months, the several parties launched a second round of negotiations to reconstitute a monopoly. The several schemes, discussed simultaneously, are worth listing for their variety, innovation and mutual contradiction:

1. Gye pays Mapleson to leave the Royal Italian Opera outright
2. Gye and Mapleson present Italian opera at both Her Majesty's and the Royal Italian Opera, possibly with John Mitchell as a partner, to swamp Wood
3. Wood joins Gye at the Royal Italian Opera, and together they banish Mapleson to the provinces and overthrow Jarrett altogether
4. Gye lets Her Majesty's to Wood and they operate as partners, although under the semblance of competition

¹¹² GD, 9 November 1869. Jarrett later told Gye that Mapleson had *initiated* this scheme, although it is not entirely clear that he did. The plot also implicated a fourth impresario in an advisory role, the long-forgotten Benjamin Lumley. Mapleson's version of these developments in the *Memoirs*, reproduced in Rosenthal, *Two Centuries*, 167-68, seems largely fabricated when considered in relation to the prodigious detail which Gye provides in the diaries.

¹¹³ GD, 10 December 1869 to 4 January 1870.

5. The three managers revive the terms of the August agreement: that is, Mapleson and Wood are quarter partners but Gye retains the sole lease of Her Majesty's, which is kept closed to opera.

The prospect of a Gye-Mapleson-Wood triumvirate came close to fruition but fell apart in the beginning of January because Wood remained hostage to Jarrett's wishes, and because Mapleson insisted upon a joint lease of Her Majesty's, which Gye would not allow. Plans evolved for a competitive 1870 season—Mapleson and Gye together once more—but the dissolution of their partnership appeared inevitable.

The image of the opera industry which emerges from this series of maneuvers is that Gye commanded more power than anyone else by virtue of his unassailable control over the premier opera house, its orchestra and chorus and a group of leading singers. No other player in the industry had combined these minimum requirements for the presentation of opera as he had; Mapleson had always depended on Jarrett for singers and never controlled his own house; Jarrett influenced singers, but had no theatre; Wood could sell tickets and now had a theatre, but nothing to put in it. Nevertheless, Gye's position, like that of any impresario, was vulnerable. His security and purse strings were too easily subject to the demands of any entrepreneur able to combine the minimum requirements or even able to muster a credible threat of opposition. Even if Wood, Mapleson and Gye had bridged their differences, another entrepreneur could have combined with Jarrett to establish an opposing venture; from a structural perspective, monopoly was unsustainable in this environment.

A Hint of Innovation

The prospectus for the Italian Opera, Drury Lane promised the most varied and adventurous opera season London had seen in over two decades. It listed a repertoire of 33 operas from which Wood would choose, an extraordinary number for a new company. Like Mapleson in 1868, Wood could draw from Drury Lane's stock of theatrical properties; certainly, he could have easily staged any of the twenty operas

which Mapleson had given and, indeed, the prospectus named eighteen of them.¹¹⁴ The list also included several works performed exclusively at Her Majesty's Theatre in the 1860s (*Falstaff*, *Mireille*, *Forza*); it is possible that Arditì served as the conduit for transferring these works to Wood's company in 1870, although there is no evidence that his conducting scores survived the fire of 1867. For the few works which Mapleson had never performed—*Favorita*, *Tell*, *Fra Diavolo*, *Masaniello*, *Otello*—Wood may have benefited from the services of Gye's copyist, J. Horton, who seemed to have independent control over music materials; Gye noted, 'Horton came and I found he had agreed to lend Wood music for his opera, on [illegible] altho he had assured me he would not assist him in any way.'¹¹⁵ As if this stock of operas was not impressive in itself, the enterprise gained further distinction from an extensive list of novelties which included relatively recent French and Italian operas (Thomas' *Mignon*, Verdi's *Macbeth*, Schira's *Silvaggia*), older works (Weber's *Abu Hassan*, a completed version of Mozart's *L'oca del Cairo*, Cherubini's *Les deux journées*), a revival of Rossini's *Tancredi*, not performed in London since 1848, and the first staging of any Wagner opera in England, *Der fliegende Holländer* or, as they rechristened it, *L'Olandese dannato*.¹¹⁶

The orientation of this programme was astute. The managers followed the maxim that for a second Italian opera house to succeed in London, they must distinguish it by advancing the repertoire. This strategy posed a bold challenge to Mapleson and Gye: it not only combined their individual approaches to the provision of novelty in the

¹¹⁴ The list did not include *Medea* or *Fidelio*, two of the works which the Royal Italian Opera presented under the coalition. The Gye diaries intimate that Mapleson may have transferred some of the performance materials for *Medea* but do not indicate their point of origin (GD, 20 April 1870). See pp. 245-6 above for *Fidelio*.

¹¹⁵ GD, 8 February 1870. By the start of the season, Horton defected to Drury Lane altogether (Drury Lane Prospectus, *Times*, 15 March 1870).

¹¹⁶ Weber's one act opera had appeared in English at Drury Lane in 1825 but this was to be the first Italian performance anywhere, translated by S. de Castrone with new recitatives by Arditì. It was to be paired with Mozart's unfinished *opera buffa*, which met with great success in Paris in 1867 in a French version arranged by T. C. Constantin to a new libretto by V. Wilder. The Drury Lane performance translated this version into Italian and included recitatives by Bottesini (Lowenberg). The Cherubini had already had considerable success on the English lyric stage as *The Water Carrier* throughout the nineteenth century.

1860s—that is, Gye's commitment to new compositions and Mapleson's to classical revivals—but it also promised Wagner, whose works those impresarios had avoided. Considering that Wood led nearly identical artistic resources as Mapleson commanded in the 1860s—the orchestra of Her Majesty's, a chorus recruited from the principal theatres of Italy and Spain, the same production personnel, and a troupe which included many of the same singers—it would be necessary to revisit the question of Gye and Mapleson's artistic vision had Wood succeeded in carrying out such an ambitious programme.

The season results did not live up to the promises of the prospectus, although the results were still impressive and the three-pronged artistic strategy still manifest. Of eighteen operas presented, Wood created new productions for six: *Dinorah*, *Robert*, *Otello*, *Abu Hassan/Oca del Cairo* (a double bill counted here as two operas), *Mignon* and *L'Olandese dannato*.¹¹⁷ The introduction of four new operas in a single season should not be disparaged, for no impresario of Italian opera in London matched such activity since Lumley in 1851.¹¹⁸ These works were not performed very much, only thrice for the Weber/Mozart and Thomas and twice for the Wagner. Furthermore, Wood attempted such innovation only within the context of a rather ordinary season, one which mirrored the constitution of the 1870 season at the Royal Italian Opera:

Genre	Drury Lane (61 performances)	RIO (79 performances)
Italian	51%	52%
Opera seria/buffa	36%	39%
Verdi	15%	13%
French	39%	40%
Meyerbeer	18%	15%
Classical	7%	8%
German (Wagner)	3%	-

¹¹⁷ Although it is likely that Wood drew liberally from the materials in the Drury Lane stores, his investment in these productions was probably comparable to or slightly less than Gye's expenditures for new productions, as explored earlier chapter 4, page 133.

¹¹⁸ I am grateful to Jennifer Hall for providing me with lists of repertoire for Her Majesty's Theatre from 1821-61.

Wood generously provided the public with new works but, the Wagner addition notwithstanding, his venture did not embrace a fundamentally different artistic philosophy than opera companies past.

The factors which continually scuttled Gye and Mapleson's plans also confined just how revolutionary Wood's project could be. First, a poorly rounded troupe, most notably in the soprano ranks, constrained the range of operas he could offer. Mathilde Savertal from Pisa, for example, had been slated to assume nearly all the Verdi operas—*Trovatore*, *Traviata*, *Ballo* and *Macbeth*—and most likely Schira's *Silvaggia* but her absence left all but the first of these unperformed.¹¹⁹ This setback left the company with three *prime donne*: the capable Marie Monbelli and the leading attractions, Nilsson and di Murska, together in the same company for the first time. The similarity between their voice types sacrificed generic variety in favour of the repertoire with high tessitura and difficult coloratura for which they were best known: Lucia, Amina, Gilda, Dinorah, Isabelle (*Robert*) and Astrafiammante (di Murska); Marguerite (*Faust*), Mignon, Donna Elvira, Desdemona and Alice (*Robert*) (Nilsson).¹²⁰ The few other operas Wood assigned them may have been instances of poor casting: Murska as Senta and Leonora (*Trovatore*) and Nilsson as the Countess.¹²¹ These are roles which the singers did not regularly undertake and the other parts they sang alongside these would suggest that their voices could most likely not have traversed the weight and colour these roles demand. Such questionable casting certainly testifies to Wood's difficulty to provide the variety he intended. Two of the remaining four works presented that season—*Barbiere* and *Martha*—also featured coloratura singing so while showmanship was in abundance, the diversity of offering was constrained.

¹¹⁹ Santley, 313.

¹²⁰ Thomas adapted the mezzo-soprano role of Mignon for Nilsson (*'Mignon,' New Grove Opera*, 3:382).

¹²¹ Although Santley wrote that di Murska was optimally suited for Senta ('She looked it to perfection, the weird, earnest, yet dreamy, expression on her face'), he never mentions how she sang it (312).

Extra-artistic factors also guided the frequent repetition of the most familiar operas and the limited appearance of the new operas. As a bookseller, Wood must have strongly understood the need to fulfill promises in the prospectus and adhere to the published weekly schedules. Indeed, he announced that, contrary to typical practice, he would standardize performance dates and not switch subscription nights.¹²² To the credit of his management, his schedule suffered few changes because of delays or royal request, remarkable for a new venture. With such a sense of purpose, it is likely that he would have essayed several more of the novelties announced, but singer illnesses upset his plans as the season progressed. Most notably, Nilsson was sidelined four of the first five weeks she was supposed to sing, which promoted frequent repetition of the operas which other sopranos could easily assume (*Martha*, *Lucia*, *Sonnambula*, *Faust*). Her absence crippled Wood, who needed her drawing power to reverse his disastrous financial performance in the month of April and early May.¹²³ When Nilsson's health improved in mid-June, it became imperative for Wood to recoup his losses. Nilsson therefore sang in roughly three out of every four or five performances each week, with *Figaro* and *Otello* appearing weekly among sprinklings of *Faust* and *Robert*.

The presentation of new works suffered for similar reasons. *Mignon* was staged three weeks after Nilsson's recovery, as soon as it was sufficiently rehearsed. Wood mounted the well-received opera three times in nine days but then dropped it because his Philine's engagement terminated. The double bill of *Abu Hassan/L'oca del Cairo* was also sabotaged by singer illness. It was the first novelty prepared, ready for performance by 30 April. The illness of Gassier, however, delayed the première until 12 May and the operas, despite their success, were only offered sporadically during the height of the season. The production of *L'Olandese dannato* deserves greater consideration.¹²⁴

¹²² *Times*, 9 April 1870.

¹²³ Gye's informants included John Mitchell and Joseph Tagliafico (GD, 30 April, 16 and 24 May 1870).

¹²⁴ Lowenberg, 418-20. Apart from Germany, Austria and Switzerland, it was performed in Prague in 1856.

Wood's choice of this work instead of *Lohengrin* and *Tannhäuser*, which Mapleson and Gye had announced in previous seasons, is likely rooted in the score's Italianate division into distinct numbers, its evocation of distinctive dramatic tableaux and a harmonic language less inscrutable to the musically conservative Victorian audience. Davison praised Wood's good judgement for selecting the Wagner work more 'Weberian' and less 'incoherent and formless' than its successors and filled with more 'genuine music' that the audience could applaud.¹²⁵ Rehearsals for *L'Olandese dannato* began mid-May, but it did not appear until 23 July, at which time only two performances could be mustered before the end of the season.¹²⁶ Di Murska initially resisted the work, complaining that 'it was all Flying Dutchman while Senta was nobody.'¹²⁷ The work probably ran into further rehearsal difficulties because of the unfamiliarity of the orchestral and choral writing; in fact, the London première omitted nearly all of the exhilarating double sailor chorus 'Johohoe! Johohoe! Hoe! Hoe!,' a surprising move during this, the age of spectacle opera.¹²⁸ Arditi attributed the poor attendance to this opera to the declaration of war between France and Germany which called German residents of London back to their country. No doubt this political environment also influenced the British population against German entertainments for that year and ensuing seasons, for Wagner did not re-emerge on the lyric stage in England for another five years.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ *Times*, 25 July and 1 August 1870. A burlesque entitled *The Flying Dutchman, or, the Demon Seaman and The Lass that Loves a Sailor* at the Royalty Theatre the previous winter may have also inspired this decision, although unlikely (*Times*, 4 December 1869). No sources have revealed whether the burlesque used any of Wagner's music. It was probably based upon the English nautical burletta *The Flying Dutchman; or, The Phantom Ship* (1827) by George Rodwell and Edward Fitzball (Lowenberg, 419-20). Shaw suggests that Santley influenced the decision to present *L'Olandese dannato*. If his source is *Student and Singer*, then Santley's contribution was to support and encourage the production of it, not to suggest it (*Shaw's Music*, 1:181; Santley, 311).

¹²⁶ *Times*, 16 May 1870.

¹²⁷ Santley, *Student and Singer*, 311.

¹²⁸ *Times*, 1 August 1870. The performance materials for the 1877 production at the Royal Italian Opera also omitted most of this chorus (ROHA).

¹²⁹ Arditi, 190; *Times*, 1 August 1870.

Wood's novelties won critical acclaim but failed financially.¹³⁰ Towards the end of his troubled season, Wood approached Gye once more with a proposal to combine, but Gye rejected it as he no longer viewed Wood as a threat.¹³¹ Jarrett also made overtures to rejoin the Royal Italian Opera, but Gye felt a reconciliation would only further the agent's clout:

[Chappell] said there was no doubt that Jarrett through Davison had influenced the Press & he thought if Jarrett could bring Nilsson with him it would be worth my while to take him & thus swamp Wood - I said I would consider the matter but I thought that Jarrett had behaved so treacherously to me & it was so well known that all would think I feared him if I took him back & I should make him more powerful than ever.¹³²

Wood returned to bookselling and Jarrett continued to enjoy unique clout as Mapleson and Gye battled for Nilsson and as his interests turned increasingly to concert tours of America. Wood's venture was an interesting experiment but demonstrated that no outsider was about to change what the public valued in opera (i.e., stars), nor organize an opera company in a way which avoided the vicissitudes of an enterprise inherently resistant to scientific planning.

Monopoly Dissolves

At the Royal Italian Opera in 1870, Gye once again dominated the selection of the troupe and programme, as Mapleson's duplicity over the previous months incurred the senior partner's mistrust. The Royal Italian Opera had lost Arditi and all but two of Mapleson's singers from the previous season, Tietjens and Scalchi. Gye therefore engaged Auguste Vianesi, Director of Music at the Imperial Opera St. Petersburg as principal conductor,

¹³⁰ Bennett, 249. For the amount of Wood's losses, see chapter 4, page 133.

¹³¹ GD, 12 August 1870.

¹³² GD, 28 June 1870.

and Mapleson hired, to Gye's chagrin, Enrico Bevignani, former *maestro al piano* at Her Majesty's Opera and the husband of Tietjens' niece.¹³³ Bevignani earned half the salary of Vianesi but only conducted nine out of 79 performances, so was really no more than an assistant. With regard to singers, the managers hired five of the singers Mapleson had not engaged for the 1869 season, but 21 singers in the troupe were Gye's. Patti and Tietjens led the company, bolstered by Lucca and Mario, and the new soprano Mathilde Sessi. As a consequence of competition, most of the singers who renewed their engagements from the previous season enjoyed a salary increase of 10% to 20% (table 11).¹³⁴

Of the 29 operas performed that season—more than any London opera institution had ever presented in a single season—fully twelve featured exclusively Gye's singers and none exclusively Mapleson's. Performances were divided evenly among the four *prime donne*: Patti (27), Tietjens (26, more frequently than in the previous season, although the managers continued to squabble over her abilities), Lucca (24) and Sessi (20). Patti and Tietjens assumed their usual roles, and Gye restored to the programme the French works for which Lucca was known (*Africaine*, *Fra Diavolo*, *Favorita*). Sessi 'replaced' Nilsson, assuming most of her roles (Gilda, Lucia, Violetta, *Astrafiammante*, *Ophélie*), and she also undertook Marie (*Figlia*) and Norina (*Pasquale*), two roles formerly associated with Patti; perhaps Maurice Strakosch, who represented both singers, mediated this potentially volatile reallocation.

The only 'new works' announced in the prospectus that season were *Macbeth*, *Medea* and Fabio Campana's *Esmeralda*. The announcement of *Macbeth* was curious, considering that both Gye and Mapleson had abandoned Verdi's opera ten years

¹³³ GD, 28 April 1870; Arditi, 165. Vianesi actually liked Bevignani and Gye continued to hire them both for the duration of his management. Shaw could not abide Bevignani's conducting and quipped, 'There are few persons whom I have less desire to see alive again than Costa; but there are moments when Bevignani makes me miss him' (cited in 'Bevignani,' *New Grove Opera*, 1:463).

¹³⁴ Notable exceptions included Tietjens, whose loyalty to Mapleson was unquestioned, and Mario, whose voice had by this time deteriorated substantially. He could therefore not reasonably demand such high sums as before.

earlier.¹³⁵ Since then, it had had only mixed success at the Théâtre Lyrique in the revised version of 1865. Perhaps it seemed appealing since no 'new' Verdi work had appeared in London since *Forza* three seasons earlier. The work was abandoned, however, and it remained unstaged in England until 1938.¹³⁶ The production of *Medea*, one of Tietjens' most celebrated operas, was not the type of opera which interested Gye—he found it 'awfully heavy'—but Mapleson counseled that it would be cheap to produce:

Mapleson bothered me into giving this opera much against my wish - he assured me several times that he had every thing necessary for it except a little scenery - only a fortnight ago he told Harris and me so-- but after I was gone to Paris it was found that an immense number of dresses properties &c had to be made as he used the Drury Lane stock when *Medea* was given there.¹³⁷

Mapleson had also convinced Gye of its box-office appeal but the two performances disappointed: 'Mapleson had told me that the opera had drawn for him £400 houses but last night the receipt was only £116' and on the second night 'only £95 in the House-- lots of boxes and stalls empty altho we gave all the vacant boxes and stalls away - people would not come for nothing even.'¹³⁸ Neither manager produced *Medea* in London again. Although the future of the more familiar works of Mozart, Beethoven and Weber was assured, the failure of *Medea* in 1870 cast a final blow to the attempt to resurrect classical operas under the Mapleson and Gye régimes. The third novelty, Campana's *Esmeralda*, was the first of a series of Italian operas written for Adelina Patti. She had introduced the work in St. Petersburg the previous December and it was at her insistence that the managers joined with Chappell to pay Campana £500 for the performance and

¹³⁵ Chorley, 315. Willert Beale had given the opera in the provinces in 1858 and 1861 (Arditi, 56; Beale, *Impresario*, 356-57).

¹³⁶ Lowenberg, 437-38.

¹³⁷ GD, 30 April 1870.

¹³⁸ GD, 30 April and 3 May 1870.

publication rights.¹³⁹ However, since Russia had no international copyright conventions, this transfer of rights was meaningless. Chappell therefore commissioned 'some alterations and additions made to the score of the Opera and so as no one could tell what had been played in Russia and what not he could sufficiently for his purpose secure the publication.'¹⁴⁰ Gye rather liked the opera—he wrote, 'the music was not very scientific but very taking and with plenty of melody'—but it met with poor houses.¹⁴¹ Gye said the Press 'had so cut up that Opera that it produced nothing' and he dropped it after four performances.¹⁴²

Whereas Wood seemed to believe that renewed competition demanded innovation, Mapleson and Gye, producing only one new opera to satisfy their star soprano, tried other ways to generate interest in their season. Programming patterns continued to move further in the direction established in the previous two seasons; that is, a movement away from *stagione* and *semi-stagione* programming and towards a pure repertory system by which the manager selected many operas from the stores and rotated them for maximum variety. One implication of this strategy was that many works appeared only once or twice the entire season. From 1861 until the end of 1867, roughly one quarter of the operas in a season would have had such limited exposure, usually mounted as a last minute substitute. In 1870, however, nearly half of the operas presented only received one or two presentations. The only works not programmed at random were *Barbiere*, *Don Giovanni* and *Le nozze di Figaro*, given once per week.

What lay behind this movement? Similar to previous seasons, the managers needed to present their *prime donne* in all the leading roles the public expected as well as in something new, and needed to balance the number of appearances of their stars. In the

¹³⁹ GD, 14 January and 3 February 1870.

¹⁴⁰ GD, 24 March 1870. Among other alterations, Campana rewrote the entire fourth act.

¹⁴¹ GD, 14 June 1870.

¹⁴² GD, 27 June 1870. He revived it once the following season because under the terms of the agreement, a fifth representation would secure the exclusive right to the opera in England (GD, 7 June 1871).

coalition, there were a greater number of star singers to juggle and, as most had accumulated new roles each season, their repertoires had grown. Bestowing further importance on the rotation of star sopranos, the managers suffered an unenviable tenor situation. The public still wanted to see Mario, but he had little voice left and could only perform once or twice per week. The other leading tenor, Wachtel, only sang for the months of April and May until a row with Patti during a performance of *Don Giovanni* prompted his resignation.¹⁴³ The other principal tenors, Gunz, Naudin and Marino were not sufficient draws themselves. If a lack of tenors made it impossible for Gye and Mapleson to cast any one opera adequately enough to warrant frequent repetition, they could at least focus greater attention on their soprano talent by rotating them in a wide range of their most celebrated roles.

Another reason for this transition was that, once again, both Gye and Mapleson were utterly sidetracked from artistic matters. As usual, lawsuits distracted Gye. Just before the beginning of the 1870 season, one Building Fund contributor filed a Chancery bill against Gye and his bankers, suing for immediate payment of the principal loan plus the back interest and calling for Gye's removal from the management of the opera.¹⁴⁴ Apparently, the suit was only a bluff to make Gye extend the lease of boxes to the contributors but it definitely worried the bank and spurred the other contributors to take further action.¹⁴⁵ They convened a meeting in mid-June and demanded an audit of the opera accounts to 'see whether it were worth while to carry on the opera!'¹⁴⁶ Gye convinced them to wait a few weeks to see what would become of the prospective sale

¹⁴³ In some houses, Masetto and Zerlina would leave the stage when Don Ottavio sang 'Il mio tesoro.' Before Wachtel began, Joseph Tagliafico left but Patti remained and the tenor instructed her, 'Leave the stage.' She stormed off and told Gye she would never sing with Wachtel again; she apologized after it was revealed that Tagliafico never notified her of Wachtel's wishes. By that point, Wachtel was enraged and resigned from the company himself (*Times*, 3 June [Wachtel letter to the Editor] and 11 June 1870).

¹⁴⁴ *Meyrick v. Gye*, 21 March 1870, PRO C16/657/M55.

¹⁴⁵ GD, 24 and 25 March 1870.

¹⁴⁶ GD, 13 June 1870.

of the Floral Hall to the Duke of Bedford, a key component of his debt restructuring plan.

At the same time that pressure from the Trustees intensified, Gye's increasingly hostile battle with Mapleson for the lease of Her Majesty's Theatre overshadowed every aspect of their joint management. Unfortunately for Gye, Dudley's solicitor had not acted to grant the lease to him alone but favoured instead a joint lease with Mapleson; Dudley remained characteristically aloof and did not intervene, despite his agreement with Gye.¹⁴⁷ Still at loggerheads at the end of May 1870, Mapleson resurrected the old idea that Gye could take all the London opera business (both houses), leave the provinces to him, and share singers in common. Gye concurred, reiterating that 'we differed in many things in management particularly about Tietjens.'¹⁴⁸ They continued these talks the next day:

I told [Mapleson] the great difficulty with me was that if we held a joint lease of Her Majesty's Theatre I could never get rid of the liability; but I did not for peace sake, refer to all his bad deceitful behaviour last season & autumn, to his utter want of truth & I said the only way I saw to settle matters was by giving up the country business to him...& putting an end to our partnership - While we were talking & he professing the most friendly feelings and intentions towards me a person from Mr Markby (Mapleson's solicitor) was announced - he came into the room & to my utter amazement served me with a Bill in Chancery on the part of Mapleson!!! I asked M what it meant he said "Oh it is all Markby's doing I knew nothing about it until two days ago"....I proposed that our partnership should at once end-- that he should have the business in the provinces to himself I agreeing to give any of my artistes permission to engage with him whom he might require, he not to engage in any operatic or concert business in London except English Opera - He said he did not like giving up the position of Opera manager in London - he then left my room.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ GD, 15 October 1869.

¹⁴⁸ GD, 25 May 1870.

¹⁴⁹ GD, 26 May 1870.

Mapleson's bill sued Gye and Dudley for the lease of Her Majesty's.¹⁵⁰ The move was shrewd on Mapleson's part; since he no longer had singers or a valid claim to Her Majesty's, the only chance he had to extract a decent settlement from Gye as they dissolved the partnership was to manufacture another bargaining chip. A lawsuit was a great solution, for Gye's aversion to such proceedings was well known and he had a history of making concessions to avoid them.

For the third time in a year, the two managers discussed the future provision of opera in London. The three possibilities they discussed sought to avoid the outright opposition of two opera companies:

1. Mapleson takes the provinces; Gye takes London and pays Mapleson an additional £750 per annum
2. Mapleson acquires the lease of Her Majesty's but does not give Italian opera in London except for five weeks in the autumn; Gye pays Mapleson £2,000 per annum so long as no Italian opera is performed
3. Gye sells the Royal Italian Opera to Mapleson.¹⁵¹

The financial allure of monopoly remained so seductive that none of these solutions took into account the lesson of the previous year: that monopoly of opera in London was unsustainable. Nor did the solutions acknowledge the impossibility of Gye and Mapleson ever achieving a functional business relationship. Gye would not agree to any of these resolutions until Mapleson stopped the Chancery suit and although Mapleson repeatedly said he would, six weeks expired and he still had not done so. These dealings incited the strongest language and most hostile feelings of Gye's entire career. Using diary entries as an indicator of Gye's daily activities, one recognizes that his attention to the opera season virtually came to a halt for the months of June and July as he dealt with the contributors' pressure and the end of his partnership with Mapleson.

¹⁵⁰ *Mapleson v. Gye and Dudley*, 8 June 1870, C16/659/M109, PRO.

¹⁵¹ GD, 2 June 1870 ff.

Incredibly, in the depth of these crises, one of Gye's wealthiest supporters, Andrew Montagu, made an offer which would not only help resolve Gye's immediate problems but would transform the fate of the Royal Italian Opera for the following decades: 'entirely unasked he offered to lend me some money.'¹⁵² Montagu, a Yorkshire landowner, made this modest proposal with the sole intention of enabling Gye to rid himself of Mapleson, in accordance with the penalty terms of the managers' initial agreement. Within days, Gye paid Mapleson £4,000 to drop the case and to leave the Royal Italian Opera entirely with Gye the sole claimant to Her Majesty's; always the man of business, Gye continued to rent Covent Garden to Mapleson for the next two autumn seasons despite their renewed rivalry. Very quickly, Montagu's beneficence ran much deeper. As will be addressed in the afterword, he began to discuss lending Gye enough money to eradicate nearly all his debts to the bank and other creditors.

Gye emerged in 1871 much stronger than he had entered this era, although hardly in the ways that he anticipated at the time of forming the coalition. The venture with Mapleson helped him to reassert his control over artistic operations and restored several classical works to his repertoire. His efforts to prevent the reconstruction of Her Majesty's had not succeeded, but he nevertheless insinuated his own interests into the fate of the theatre enough to block competition there for a short time. Most important, he won the support of a business angel who would relieve him of his debt and ultimately acquire the company from his family. Mapleson emerged from the coalition much as he had started, though a little worse for wear. Still without any satisfactory permanent home, he returned to Drury Lane, his ability to engage his former troupe somewhat imperiled by his bruised relationship with Jarrett.

From an industry perspective, these years demonstrated that monopoly was not a practicable way to avert the problems inherent to an unregulated opera environment; or rather, that it *was* but that, more than just being a question of a single presenter winning control of all opera institutions, monopoly required dominating the entire range of

¹⁵² GD, 7 July 1870.

businesses which supported opera production—an unlikely prospect. Years later, in 1881, Ernest Gye and Mapleson would join in a partnership which effectively left London to the former and America to the latter, an arrangement perhaps of necessity, for Mapleson's bank correspondence suggests he could not go on alone much longer; this partnership dissolved after two years. As far as Frederick Gye and Mapleson were concerned, however, neither would attempt a monopoly for the remainder of their coinciding régimes, in part because the experience of 1868-70 countered their expectations but also because their circumstances changed. Obviously, after the turbulence of their joint direction, they wished not to risk so close an association with each other again.¹⁵³

¹⁵³ On a slip of paper inserted into the 1875 travel diary, Ralph de Rohan refers to Mapleson as 'the man of whom my father told me "Your Grandfather [i.e., Frederick Gye] sent for Mapleson and said to him 'if only you could have learned to do two things: to tell the truth and to go straight, we could have made such a success of the amalgamation'." To what he particularly referred I do not know.' Gye's alleged statement would seem to be some kind of deathbed confession, but I have not found any other reference to this episode in his or his daughter's diaries.

Afterword

Throughout the 1860s, monopoly had appeared the panacea for various pressures—financial, operational and artistic—which competition engendered. The agitated realignment of allegiances between 1868 and 1870 saw monopoly briefly attempted and then abandoned as a lasting proposition. The musical and institutional legacy of these three turbulent years and of the 1860s was long-lasting. A full treatment of the period 1871-78 would need to cover extensive material not yet touched upon; several topics merit dissertations of their own, including the national music movement, Mapleson's National Opera House and the arrival of Wagner's operas in London. This afterword will therefore examine only in brief the strategic redefinitions of Gye and Mapleson's companies after the coalition dissolved. More broadly, it will extrapolate the importance of their managements for the later development of opera in London. I will conclude with a discussion of the significance of research into music institutions within the domain of historical musicology.

The problem which plagued Mapleson through the 1860s—the lack of a suitable venue for opera—would prove his ruin in characteristically grandiose fashion. Mapleson did not take the separation with Gye particularly well and, although resuming tenancy at Drury Lane, he repeatedly attempted to reconstitute the partnership.¹ When the rent of Drury Lane increased in 1872, Mapleson tried to obtain the lease for Her Majesty's Theatre but could not.² In 1874, he launched a project which might have changed the course of opera history in London: a new National Opera House on the Thames Embankment, situated next to the House of Commons across Parliament Street, designed to seat 3,000 and resemble the Palais Garnier. Mapleson's stated purpose was to establish a theatre dedicated to Italian opera in summer and English opera in winter, both ventures employing young English talent from the national music schools for the

¹ GD, 2 January to 17 February 1871, 6 May to 9 June 1873.

² GD, 6 March to 20 April 1872.

orchestra, chorus and principal roles.³ Mapleson had indeed supported English musicians, but this new incarnation as prophet for national music was sheer opportunism. Several wealthy opera patrons, most notably the Duke of Edinburgh, had especial interest in supporting national projects and native composers, and Mapleson sought to appease. In practice, as he became more financially extended, Mapleson committed himself more than ever to standard Italian works, and in his *Memoirs*, he actually derided English opera.⁴ Apart from these stated artistic aspirations, Mapleson's true goal with the National Opera House scheme seems to have been to assume the advantageous position which Gye had held since 1858: that of theatre proprietor, not merely impresario, which brought greater control and profit. Mapleson anticipated that his costs would be lower than before from savings in rent and the use of English singers. Income, he believed, would increase because the theatre was larger and, like Gye, he could benefit from year-round performances and rentals.⁵

A series of miscalculations ranging from the unfortunate to the inept plagued the project from its inception. The ground next to the Thames proved too soft for a foundation, a debacle which resulted in an inordinate loss of time and money—£33,000 for the foundation alone. The project was also too lavishly conceived; Mapleson's estimate of total construction costs was £181,000—over twice the price of Gye's Royal Italian Opera.⁶ By 1875, the edifice was built to the grand tier, when Mapleson ran out of money and construction ceased. Rather than focus on the problem at hand with all his funds and attention, Mapleson continued to pour money into the refurbishment of Drury Lane and started to explore opera presentation in America. Throughout the construction of the National Opera House, Gye remained skeptical of its success and retained a public

³ The best statement of Mapleson's mission was a speech given at the laying of the foundation stone for the National Opera House; see *Times*, 17 December 1875.

⁴ *MM*, 285 and 297-99.

⁵ Mapleson letter to *Times*, 17 July 1876.

⁶ Mapleson letter to *Times*, 17 July 1876. Based upon Mapleson's reports, Gye estimated the new opera house would cost £250,000 (letter to *Times*, 10 July 1876).

silence. Evidence suggests that he may have held his criticism as Mapleson expended his financial and political capital, waiting instead for a time he could damage it most. When Mapleson attempted to refinance the project as a means of reviving it in the summer of 1876, Gye wounded him through a series of letters in *The Times*. Point by point, the senior manager picked apart Mapleson's assumptions for the construction and operating costs of the theatre, demonstrating convincingly that it could never make money. Mapleson responded ably in each round of this newspaper feud, but Gye effectively exposed wide gaps in the project's conception and shed doubt upon its viability as a lasting venture.⁷ Mapleson failed to get his financing and the house was never completed. He turned his attention to extensive tours of America and managed the Academy of Music in New York in opposition to the Metropolitan Opera.⁸ His deplorable finances and extensive worldwide activity led him to embrace the Italian opera tradition exclusively and myopically, heedless of clear trends in the opera world towards Wagner and original language performances. When he declared bankruptcy in 1888, he blamed his misfortune solely upon the failure of the National Opera House.⁹ It was an easy scapegoat, but only the most visible emblem of the itinerancy which hindered his 30 years of management.

Gye met with greater success in extricating himself from his problems of the 1860s: how to emerge from the stranglehold of debt incurred through the reconstruction, and how to sell his company. Andrew Montagu proved a heroic benefactor. After lending Gye £30,000 to indemnify Mapleson and the mortgage from the Rock Assurance Company, he extended his support to clear the balance of Gye's debts. Between 1872 and 1875, the two negotiated carefully such that Montagu paid £75,000 to purchase one half of his debts to Coutts and the Building Fund contributors; Gye cleared the remaining half by granting long leases of boxes and stalls. Thus, by August 1875, the mortgage of

⁷ *Times*, 10 and 17 July 1876, 4 and 22 August, and 1, 21 and 29 September 1877.

⁸ This history is the subject of Cone's *First Rival*. The foundations of the National Opera House were eventually used for New Scotland Yard.

⁹ *MM*, 301n.

the theatre was held in a single set of sympathetic hands, much to Gye's relief.¹⁰ The manager still wished to sell the theatre, but after the tribulations of the 1860s, he was reluctant to advertise it again for fear of devaluing it.¹¹ Instead, he required cash in advance, but for such an arrangement there were no takers.

George Wood's experiment at Drury Lane in 1870 had signalled that it was an opportune time to reconsider previously neglected genres. However, Gye did not parlay his newfound economic freedom into new approaches to opera programming. For one, his financial obligations had not really subsided; although pressure was alleviated, he now owed money to Montagu rather than to the bank and a consortium of creditors. His appetite for risk had changed little. Hoping to sell his company and increase the value of his estate for his children, the senior manager pursued strategies which promised the surest and most lucrative returns. Following the example of Jarrett and other agent-impresarios, for example, he became the exclusive manager of Emma Albani and Zaré Thalberg and sought opportunities to profit from their appearances in England and abroad. Whereas in the 1860s, Gye resisted the demands of his singers, he now seemed a proponent of the star system. The programming of the London season also continued to move further towards the pure repertory approach begun in the late 1860s. Gye embraced an 'event mentality,' rotating a breathtaking number of operas and stars in rapid succession; in 1874, for example, he presented 84 performances of 33 operas (table 2).¹² With so few appearances of each work, Gye was able to announce each performance as the 'first,' 'last' or 'only' of the season, every evening distinguished with some unique claim. This ensured great publicity at a time when the advertising battle between Mapleson and Gye had heated once more.¹³ Such a schedule also reflected the fact that

¹⁰ See GD, 8 April 1872, 14-15 May 1872, 13 January 1873, 23 June 1874, 22 February and 23-24 July 1875; Coutts private ledgers and money lent books, 1875-76.

¹¹ GD, 15 June 1871.

¹² This type of schedule stood in direct contrast to Mapleson's preference for more repetitions of few works; that same year, he gave 76 performances of only 19 operas, with five constituting half of the total season.

¹³ Gye became acutely concerned about the placement, fees and impact of his newspaper advertisements. He spent three times as much on advertising than ever before and announced his opera

his company now consisted of three or four leading sopranos, each of whom was expected to assume at least four of their premiere roles, in addition to novelties. Event programming succeeded: by 1874, Gye once again met and, later, surpassed the high income he achieved in the early 1860s.

With Mapleson's venue troubles and Gye's new ethos, the post-coalition era of 1871-74 saw the fewest new works added to the repertoires of the rival companies than any time before or after. As Gye's tremendous box-office results suggest, the public welcomed a schedule filled with stars in a variety of familiar roles. Newspaper critics, too, continued to abandon their scorn for familiar programming and became increasingly complacent. In 1872, for example, Davison wrote,

Mr Mapleson seems for the moment to be resting on his laurels; but the attractions he can put forth, at this period of the season especially, are so inviting to the numerous visitors to the capital, whose first idea of entertainment is the Italian Opera, that he may easily afford to postpone for a short time any novelty he may have in preparation....If it answers the purpose of the director of Her Majesty's Opera, and the public are satisfied, no one has a right to complain.¹⁴

The same day, Davison wrote of the Royal Italian Opera, 'Mr Gye, at this time of the year, gives the musical public almost a surfeit of Italian opera; but his performances are generally so attractive that it is easy to pardon him.' At other times, Gye escaped censure for giving familiar operas because critics were awed by the extent and variety of his offerings.

The public's lethargic acceptance of the status quo continued until the introduction of Wagner on a more permanent basis beginning in 1875. Ironically, Gye's support of Wagner fell squarely within his increasing conservatism. His decision to give *Lohengrin* in 1875 hardly signalled a change in his or his audience's aesthetics. It was still regarded as controversial repertoire, though many came to accept that Wagner deserved a fair

schedule an unprecedented two weeks in advance. In 1875, Gye created a sensation when he announced the schedule for an entire month (GD, 22 April 1875).

¹⁴ *Times*, 15 July 1872.

hearing in London before he could be rightfully condemned. Even until the night of its first performance, Gye had little faith in the work's chance for success. Two factors motivated his decision to mount it: Emma Albani championed Wagner's music, and Gye sought to please her; and if he did not present it first, Mapleson would lay siege to that claim.¹⁵ Hence, *prima donna* and competitive pressures once again prevailed to induce one of the most significant repertoire developments in late-nineteenth-century London. Gye's great success with this 'experiment' spurred him to mount other new works in the late 1870s including *Aida*, *Tannhäuser*, *Der fliegende Holländer* and *Mignon*, among others. Gye incorporated these additions within his entrenched programming structures and continued to rotate the old standard repertoire furiously. Perhaps because Mapleson had become a weak competitor, perhaps because Gye had accrued wisdom over many years in the business, these models finally achieved a machine-like logic and consistency and yielded the most stellar plaudits and financial results of Gye's career. After his death in 1878, none of Gye's successors were able to steer the company ably through the taxing economics which encumbered the Royal Italian Opera. In 1892, Augustus Harris, heeding Shaw's criticisms, stopped the company's downward spiral when he introduced artistic reforms, updating the repertoire and converting the Royal Italian Opera into a house for performance in the original language. The year 1896 marked the end of this form of impresario management as the Grand Opera Syndicate purchased the mortgages on the theatre from Montagu's heirs and began to subsidize performances.¹⁶

The opera system of the 1860s bore powerful consequences for the development of opera in England beyond the succeeding decades. Indeed, one can trace the roots of the modern opera institution to the Gye and Mapleson régimes. The rise of aggressive sales techniques in a competitive market, the increasing hegemony of a star class of singers over the entire industry, and especially the repetition of a small, core repertoire from season to season are trends which defined their era and prevail today. These particular

¹⁵ Dideriksen and Ringel, 16-17; GD, 19 February 1875.

¹⁶ For further reading on Harris and the Grand Opera Syndicate, see Rosenthal, *Two Centuries*. The author Charles Nielsen Gatty is currently researching the operations of the Syndicate.

developments were common to most contemporary European opera centres. Others were unique to London. Most notably, the premise of competition within the opera industry, so tenuous throughout the 1850s, emerged from the 1860s as an established organizing principle. The failure of the short-lived monopoly in 1870 confirmed the inevitability of opera competition, and free trade has endured in London ever since. Moreover, the 1860s set an important and lasting precedent for the very orientation and nature of opera companies in London. Under Gye's management, Covent Garden became the premiere locus for operatic activity in England. Mapleson created the first lasting, workable model for a second opera company: one which depended somewhat less upon the international star system, sought specifically to build audiences for the art form and supplemented London activities with the provision of opera to the provinces. Beginning in 1875, Carl Rosa followed a similar plan for his company, and, in more recent times, Sadler's Wells Opera has filled that role. Certainly, opera institutions in London have changed fundamentally since the Gye-Mapleson era. The Italian opera convention has been abandoned, government subvention introduced and the functions and personnel of opera institutions greatly expanded. Yet the premise of competition and the basic form of a leading international house and a second, more nationally focused one has survived.

Given the apparent historical relevance and importance of this period, it is useful to return to Shaw, Rosenthal and other commentators' dismissal of the Gye-Mapleson era and question the grounds for their scorn. I began with the premise that Shaw's observations about repertoire stagnation were on target, but complaints about inept management and reactionary aesthetics were insensitive to the system in which the impresarios operated. In grappling with a historical problem defined along these lines, my study questions what subjects of study comprise musicological interest. As positivists and as individuals with an interest in music as aesthetic experience, historical musicologists typically examine periods or subjects which encapsulate observable musical

innovation or development.¹⁷ What, then, is the value of studying a peripheral centre for opera creation during what was clearly a Dark Age? Certainly, the circumstances behind the first performances in England of major compositions constitute a topic of fundamental import and interest. Additionally, this thesis has shown that the economics of opera in London shaped the development of the art form in Europe generally, for the English managers were key figures in the flow of singers and works along the Italian opera circuit. Though valid, both explanations are still somewhat frustrating: they assign importance to the periphery only insofar as it illuminates more central musical developments.

Perhaps repertoire stagnation is, itself, interesting and important within the domain of musicology. Understanding the dynamics and pressures which shape a repertoire affords a richer sense of music performance, particularly opera, as a human enterprise enmeshed in a complicated economic web. Along these lines, the 'Donizettian Dark Ages' serve as an excellent laboratory for dissecting how a repertoire became defined and promulgated. In mid-nineteenth-century London, the repetition of certain works year to year was not merely a matter of an individual or a society preferring some works over others, as the Shavian view would have it. My thesis has shown the formation of a repertoire to be the product of a conflation between individual and collective aesthetic taste on the one hand and the material conditions which surround opera production on the other. Systemic pressures forced programmatic responses at a generic level, while managers and singers' preferences and audience expectations played a role in the selection of specific works within those genres. Even these individual choices were subject to the economics of opera production; the evolution of an opera season assigned specific functions to certain works, guiding the frequency with which they were programmed. These explanations would probably not have interested Shaw. As a critic writing just after the 1860s with a specific aesthetic position to defend, Shaw abhorred repertoire stagnation. Removed from the period by decades which have only reinforced such trends, we might wish opera

¹⁷ For a full discussion of this idea, see Joseph Kerman, *Musicology* (London: Fontana Press, 1985).

developed differently but we lose the urgency to condemn and attain the desire to understand. Periods of artistic vagary and inertia become rich and vibrant areas for historical inquiry.

It is tempting but ill-advised to draw sweeping conclusions from the study of the Gye-Mapleson era about conditions which hinder the development of an art form or the way in which performance repertoires become defined generally. What matters more is the methodology which enables us to understand in detail the relationships between management, artistic policy and programming—a methodology which focuses upon the system of production and can serve as a useful entry point to a musical culture. Like any methodology, this institutional approach—positivist in its use of source material, predominantly materialist in its concerns—has limitations. Surely, a comprehensive understanding of a musical culture demands extensive consideration of at least three other areas: composition, performance practice and reception. The development of performance canons and of opera as an art form cannot be fully explained through any one of these paths of critical inquiry. The study of one inevitably devalues the historical relevance of another. In my thesis, for example, a focus on institutional history quite clearly subsumes important, specifically musical explanations for the development of the repertoire in mid-nineteenth-century England. In a musical system as economically precarious as opera, however, and especially in one so market-dependent as this, it is useful to begin constructing music history upon an institutional foundation. The institution brings together the various communities which comprise an opera system—composer, performers, industry professionals, critics, audience—and the impresario helps broker the relationship between musical creation, performance and consumption. The institution and manager must therefore be held as one of several central concerns in opera studies, and as a particularly practical and illuminating point of departure. Equipped with an understanding of the minutiae of the operations and pressures which shape the system of production, one can approach other areas of musicological interest with greater insight to achieve a dynamic and holistic understanding of a musical culture.

Appendices

Appendix A

The Mapleson Family

The Maplesons have a long and colourful history as music librarians. According to Henry Mapleson, son of the impresario, the family's prominence in English musical life dates back to the time of Queen Anne; a James Mapleson produced the first staging of a Handel opera (*Rinaldo*) in London in 1711. His descendant James Henry Mapleson I served as librarian to both William IV and Queen Victoria and was also violinist and music librarian at Drury Lane for 40 years. Upon his death in 1869, the library and position rightfully passed to his eldest son James Henry, but the impresario, immersed in opera management, passed this claim to Alfred who served the crown until his death in 1917.¹

The Maplesons remained associated with music libraries to the present day.² Briefly, Alfred Mapleson's son Lionel, a violist, joined the orchestra of the Metropolitan Opera in New York and subsequently became music librarian. This is the Mapleson responsible for the eponymous 'cylinders' (1901-4), housed for decades at the music library and released as a commercial, re-mastered recording in 1985. Lionel's son Alfred J. Mapleson assisted his father at the Met music library and later succeeded him. He also established an independent firm within the Met, the Alfred J. Mapleson Music Library, which provided performance materials for opera, oratorio, ballet, symphony and solo instruments. In 1945, he began to manage this business full-time, relocating across the street from the Met and, later, in a two-level house in Lindenhurst, New York. His son, Peter Mapleson, helped manage the business and succeeded him after his death in 1991.

¹ Henry Mapleson letter to Richard Northcott, 20 August 1925, International Music Museum; 'Mapleson,' F. Boase, *Modern English Biography* (Truro: Netherton & Worth, 1897).

² The following discussion is based in part on a private report prepared for the Mapleson family of Glen Clove, New York by Susan T. Sommer, Chief Librarian of Circulating Collections for the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts and John Shepard, head of Rare Books and Manuscripts, Music Division of the New York Public Library, 1991.

The estate became the focus of a contentious family dispute which, according to family members, precipitated the tragic death of Peter Mapleson within a year of his father. With no clear successor, a dilapidated facility and no necessary modern technologies, the future of the business looks uncertain.

The Mapleson rental collection comprises an estimated 6,000 titles, not including multiple score-and-part sets for the more popular works. Of particular interest to the musicologist is a collection of scores, mostly without parts, dating primarily from the nineteenth century. The Maplesons used these as reference tools for the preparation of orchestra parts. The collection comprises mostly early printed editions but also includes some manuscript materials used for opera performance in the 1870s and 1880s; two excursions have not uncovered any autograph score material. Of historical interest are the hundreds of memorabilia items taped, glued, tacked and pinned in glass frames, hung on the walls of the library. These relate mostly to the activities of James Henry, Alfred and Lionel Mapleson and include autographs and photographs of many of the major singers from the 1860s to the present day, letters from Balfe, Meyerbeer and Verdi, and two manuscript contracts for Patti. A scrapbook belonging to James Henry Mapleson sitting on the top shelf of a back room contains interesting records related to his management. In their evaluation of the collection, Susan Sommer and John Shepard correctly conclude that while the individual items have value, the true worth is in the sum of the parts; the collection conveys a powerful sense of an operatic continuum between England and America and across the last 150 years within the Mapleson family. A responsible music library or opera house archive would be wise to preserve the music and memorabilia collection together.

Appendix B

Financial Statements

The development of financial statements for the Royal Italian Opera, based upon Gye's account at Coutts & Co., merits some explanation. The Coutts fiscal year ended 24 June, a convention initiated by Thomas Coutts the bank's founder in 1760 and lasting until 1906. June was Gye's peak income period and, since he did not pay many major expenses until several weeks later, he often showed significant profits on the books. The Coutts method is not so useful for analyzing Gye's business activities, however, because single opera seasons (April-July) are divided across fiscal years. I have decided to calculate the financials over a calendar year (January-December). This method, too, is imperfect because it divides the winter season into two parts; nevertheless, the Italian opera season—80% of Gye's annual income—is left fully intact within a single year.

The Coutts method of itemizing deposits and withdrawals in the ledgers limits the scope of financial analysis one can conduct. Under 'Receipts,' the date and nature of the deposit is recorded, usually indicated as received income or a loan. Unfortunately, this method does not clarify whether a receipt is box-office income or, say, a payment for a singer's concert engagement. Likewise, it is impossible to correlate receipts with particular performances because deposits were not necessarily made immediately following the performance; efforts to use internal box-office figures provided in Gye's diaries to identify deposit patterns have not been fruitful. To determine the amount of income for an opera season, then, it is necessary to make approximations based upon the length of the season. For the purposes of this exercise, I use as a proxy all income from March until the end of August—that is, all the months in which the opera concern may have earned money. Comparing these results to Gye's occasional record of seasonal income, I have found that my calculations never overstate income by more than 5%.

The lists of payments in the Coutts ledgers specify the recipients of all cheques and disbursements. This detail is of enormous value for calculating the salaries of artistic

personnel and payments to the contributors. It is less helpful for identifying the costs associated with other elements of opera production; a generic 'sundries' category, usually comprising 20% of annual expenses, includes production costs and the wages of some personnel—but not all, as some members of staff are listed individually. I have had limited success in identifying the services provided to Gye by the many companies which received payments, but it remains unclear whether some of these businesses are related to the opera company or to Gye's personal affairs. Indeed, it is important to remember that Gye's account records both business and personal finances; his bankers later wanted him to separate his accounts, but he claimed it would be too much trouble.¹

Could Gye have had more income and expenses that he transacted 'off the books'? It is possible, but not likely; the fact that Gye made consistent withdrawals for 'cash' and his strong integrity argue against his reaching into the box-office till. He may have had fewer scruples about reporting personal loans to the bank. On 5 December 1868, he borrowed £500 and recorded in his diary that only £350 was deposited, the rest paid as wages to himself and his son. Yet even in this uncharacteristic moment, Gye carefully accounts for the entire sum in his diaries. Additionally, in 1871, the contributors demanded an audit of Gye's account and a chartered professional found that the opera concern actually owed Gye considerable sums.² The prospect of any large-scale embezzlement is unlikely.

These several contingencies notwithstanding, the Coutts ledgers are of enormous value. Assuming that Gye's accounting policies and his deposit and payment behaviour remained consistent over the years, it is possible to determine roughly how revenue, profitability and specific expense categories varied from year to year. A difference of several hundred pounds in two years' 'sundry' expenses should probably be ignored; however, a difference of several thousand pounds, or a clear trend over time, supported by anecdotal evidence of policy changes taken from the diaries, becomes worthy of notice.

¹ GD, 12 April 1871.

² GD, 17 and 21 May 1872.

Appendix C

Gye/Costa contract 1858 (Costa's copy, signed by Gye)

Article 1st Mr Costa engages himself & is engaged by Mr Gye to act as Director in Chief of the Music & Conductor & to superintend the mise en scene of Italian operas only to be performed at the said theatre during the season of 1858 on every Tuesday, Thursday & Saturday Evenings commencing on the 15th day of May and ending on the 15th day of August

Art 2nd Mr Costa is not to accept any Theatrical engagement during the continuance of this agreement but he is at liberty to undertake any public & private Concerts & musical performances except on Opera Evenings

Art 3rd Mr Gye shall pay to Mr Costa for his services for the said period the sum of £1300 by 4 instalments of £325 each the first of such instalments to be paid on the signing hereof & the remaining 3 instalments on the 20th day of June the 20th day of July & the 20th day of August next respectively

Art 4 Mr Costa is at liberty to absent himself from the Theatre if called away by the Orders of Her Majesty

Art 5 In case Mr Gye produces any new opera for the first time at Covent Garden or reproduces any opera composed expressly for the said theatre Mr Costa is not to be obliged to rehearse or conduct it except it is the composition of M Meyerbeer or Dr Spohr.

Art 6 In case the use of the Theatre shall be stopped by fire or the death of the Sovereign the salary of Mr Costa shall cease during the necessary continuance of the stoppage occasioned thereby

Art 7 Mr Gye is not at liberty to transfer the services of Mr Costa to any other person without his written consent

Art 8 Mr Gye to cause the orders of Mr Costa for the services of the Theatre in all matters committed as above to his charge to be respected & obeyed

Art 9 Mr Gye engages to deliver to Mr Costa the engagements signed by him for the Members of the Orchestra & Chorus as last season with such changes & additions of individuals as Mr Costa may in his discretion consider necessary & on the same terms & conditions

Art 10 Mr Gye is to give Mr Costa the name & order of appearance of every new opera he may intend to bring out at least 6 weeks before the actual performance thereof in order to give Mr Costa time to have it fully rehearsed without interruption & prepared for & also to give Mr Costa a weeks notice of every other he may think fit to perform so as to enable Mr Costa to prepare it to his satisfaction

Art 11 Mr Gye is to deliver to Mr Costa before the 10 day of May inst. full particulars of the engagements (except as to money matters) of all artistes then engaged & the like as to all artistes engaged afterwards within a week after their engagements

Art 12 Mr Gye further engages to pay Mr Costa in addition to the before mentioned payments the following sums of money amounting to £400 being the arrears due to Mr Costa for the last season viz: £100 on the signature hereof £100 on the 20th of June the 20th July & the 20th of Aug. next & in default of any or either of such payments the whole or the part remaining unpaid shall be forthwith payable by the said Mr Gye

Art 13 If & whenever any of the above stipulations should not be duly complied with on the part of Mr Gye Mr Costa shall be at liberty to withdraw his services altogether.

[Frederick Gye]

Appendix D

Mario Contract Of 1861 With Two Draft Versions

[The standard part of Gye's contract appears in block letters and handwritten elements in italics.]

[Contract version 1, Gye wrote on top:] *The counterpart of this was sent to Mario for his signature, but was returned with alterations which FG could not agree to and therefore sent another.*

Les soussignés M. Frederick Gye, Propriétaire et Directeur du Théâtre de L'Opéra Royal Italien, à Londres, d'une part, et *M. Mario* artiste dramatique, d' l'autre part, son convenus ce qui suit.

1^o. *M. Mario* s'engage à faire l'emploi de *Premier Tenor Absolu* aux Théâtres et Salles en Angleterre, en Ireland, et en Écosse, pendant la durée de son engagement avec M. Gye.

2^o. Cet engagement commencera *le premier Juin et finira le 3 Août 1861.*

3^o. Les appointements de *M Mario* pour cette période seront £1400 par mois, être payés par mois *en parties égales--*

4^o. *M. Mario* chantera dans les Concerts aussi bien que les Opéras mais *il* ne chantera nulle part hors du théâtre ~~dans la royaume de la Grande Bretagne, ni dans l'Irlande,~~ pendant l'année 1861, sans la permission écrite de M. Gye *excepté à une distance de plus de 50 miles de Londres--*

5^o. M. Gye fournira les costumes à *M. Mario* pour ses divers rôles, selon l'usage ordinaire des théâtres.

6^o. *M. Mario* se conformera aux règles ordinaires du théâtre en cas de maladie, d'incendie, répétitions, etc.

7^o. *M. Mario* s'engage de se trouver à Londres six jours avant le commencement de cet engagement pour les répétitions.

8^o. Dans la cas où M. Gye aurait besoin des services de *M. Mario* à une distance de plus de dix miles de Londres, il lui payera les frais de voyage.

9^o. *M. Mario* ne sera pas forcé de chanter plus que trois fois par semaine y compris les concerts.

10°. M Gye à la fin de cet engagement aura droit de le renouveler aux conditions proportionnelles, mais pour une époque pas plus tard que jusqu'à la fin du mois de ~~September-~~ *d'Aout* dans l'année 1861.

11°. M Gye aura aussi le droit de renouveler cet engagement pour les années du 1862 et 1863 *avec les memes conditions ma la durée de l'engagement sera pour trois mois dans chaque saison (commençant au commencement de la saison) et les appointements seront £2500 pour chaque saison.*

Londres

Le 15 Aout [mistake- it was April] 1861 Frederick Gye

[Contract version 2, Gye wrote on top:] *A copy of this was sent to Mario on April 17 1861 but returned on the 20th with many alterations-- F. G. then made out another engagement & sent it by Woodford on the 20th--*

Les soussignés M. Frederick Gye, Propriétaire et Directeur du Théâtre de L'Opéra Royal Italien, à Londres, d'une part, et *Monsieur G. Mario* artiste dramatique, d' l'autre part, son convenus ce qui suit.

1^o. *M. Mario* s'engage à faire l'emploi de *Premier Tenor Absolu* aux Théâtres et Salles en Angleterre, ~~en Irlande, et en Écosse~~, pendant la durée de son engagement avec M. Gye.

2^o. Cet engagement commencera *le Premier Juin et finira le Trois Août 1861*.

3^o. Les appointements de *M Mario* pour cette période seront £1400 être payés la moitié dans la première semaine de Juillet, la moitié dans la première semaine d'Août. -- ~~par mois, être payés par mois~~

4^o. *M. Mario* chantera dans les Concerts aussi bien que les Opéras mais *il* ne chantera nulle part hors du théâtre dans la royaume de la Grande Bretagne, ni dans l'Irlande, pendant l'année 1861, sans la permission écrite de M. Gye *excepté à une distance de plus de 50 miles de Londres et dans les concerts non payants de société--*

5^o. M. Gye fournira les costumes à *M. Mario* pour ses divers rôles, selon l'usage ordinaire des théâtres.

6^o. *M. Mario* se conformera aux règles ordinaires du théâtre en cas de maladie, d'incendie, répétitions, etc.

7^o. *M. Mario* s'engage de se trouver à Londres *Trois six* jours avant le commencement de cet engagement pour les répétitions.

8^o. Dans la cas où M. Gye aurait besoin des services de *M. Mario* à une distance de plus de dix miles de Londres, il lui payera les frais de voyage.

9^o. *M. Mario* ne sera pas forcé de chanter plus que trois fois par semaine y compris les concerts

10^o. M Gye à la fin de cet engagement aura droit de le renouveler aux conditions proportionnelles, mais pour une époque pas plus tard que jusqu'à la fin du mois de ~~September~~ *d'Aout* dans l'année 1861.

11^o. M Gye aura aussi le droit de renouveler cet engagement pour les années du 1862 et 1863 avec les memes conditions ma la durée de l'engagement sera pour trois mois assurés dans chaque saison, et les appointements seront £2500 pour chaque saison-- L'engagement de 1862 commencerait le 22 Avril, celui de 1863 le 7 Avril.

C'est entendre que M Gye n'aura pas le droit de forcer M. Mario de remplir l'engagement pour les années de 1862 et 1863 si M. Mario se retire de la scène de théâtre avant le commencement de 1862 ou 1863— dans le cas que M. Mario se décide de se retirer de la scène avant l'année 1862 et de ne pas remplir l'engagement pour 1862 il doit avertir M. Gye avant le mois de Janvier 1862— et s'il se décide de se retirer de la scène après la saison de 1862 et avant l'année de 1863 et de ne pas remplir l'engagement de 1863 il doit avertir M. Gye avant le mois de Janvier 1863—

[Written in pencil] A copy sent to Paris per J. Woodford April 18th/ 61

[Contract version 3]

Les soussignés M. Frederick Gye, Propriétaire et Directeur du Théâtre de L'Opéra Royal Italien, à Londres, d'une part, et *Monsieur G. Mario* artiste dramatique, d' l'autre part, son convenus ce qui suit.

1^o. *M. Mario* s'engage à faire l'emploi de *Premier Tenor Absolu* aux Théâtres de *Covent Garden* et au *Crystal Palace* ~~et Salles en Angleterre, en Ireland, et en Écosse,~~ pendant la durée de son engagement avec M. Gye.

2^o. Cet engagement commencera *le Premier Juin et finira le Trois Août 1861.*

3^o. Les appointements de *M Mario* pour cette période seront £1400 être payés la moitié dans la première semaine de Juillet, l'autre moitié dans la première semaine d'Août.—
~~par mois, être payés par mois~~

4^o. *M. Mario* chantera dans les Concerts aussi bien que les Opéras mais *il* ne chantera nulle part hors du théâtre [Woodford: *pendant la saison ni pourra laisser afficher ou annoncer son nom même en vue de représentation près la dite saisons*] ~~dans la royaume de la Grande Bretagne, ni dans l'Irlande, pendant l'année 1861,~~ sans la permission écrite de M. Gye *excepté à une distance de plus de 50 miles de Londres et dans les concerts non payants de société—*

5^o. M. Gye fournira les costumes à *M. Mario* [Woodford: *expressement confectionné pour lui*] pour ses divers rôles, selon l'usage ordinaire des théâtres.

6^o. *M. Mario* se conformera aux règles ordinaires du théâtre en cas de maladie, d'incendie, répétitions, etc.

7^o. *M. Mario* s'engage de se trouver à Londres *Trois six* jours avant le commencement de cet engagement pour les répétitions.

8^o. ~~Dans la cas où M. Gye aurait besoin des services de M. — à une distance de plus de dix miles de Londres, il lui payera les frais de voyage.~~ [Woodford: *M. Mario s'engage à chanter le rôle principal de tenor dans les operas Ugonotti — Trovatore — Rigoletto— Marta— Un ballo in Maschera— Barbieri— et [celui?] de Don Giovanni s'il convient a Mr Gye de [le?] lui faire jouer. Tous les nouveaux roles seront acceptés de gré a gré.*]

9^o. *M. Mario* ne sera pas forcé de chanter plus que trois fois par semaine y compris les concerts et jamais deux jours consecutives.

10^o. M Gye à la fin de cet engagement aura droit de le renouveler aux conditions proportionnelles, mais pour une époque pas plus tard que jusqu'à la fin du mois de ~~September~~ *d'Août* dans l'année 1861.

11^o. M Gye aura aussi le droit de renouveler cet engagement pour les années du 1862 et 1863 avec mêmes conditions mais la durée de l'engagement sera pour trois mois assurés dans chaque saison, et les appointements seront £2500 pour chaque saison— L'engagement de 1862 commencerait le Premier Mai, [Woodford: arrivant le 1 mai a Londre], celui de 1863 le 7 Avril. [Woodford: Dans chaque saison les appointements seront de £2500 payables en trois partiés égales a un mois de distance à commencer le quinziesme jour apres le commencement de la saison—]

C'est entendre que M. Gye n'aura pas le droit de forcer M. Mario de remplir l'engagement pour les années de 1862 et 1863 si M. Mario ne chante pas à Londres ni dans les trois Royaumes Unis de la Grand Bretagne pendant les susdites années— Si M. Gye a l'intention de profiter de ce droit il doit avertir M. Mario avant la fin des années de 1861 et 1862— Si M. Mario se decide de ne pas accepter l'engagement pour les années de 1862 ou 1863 et de ne pas chanter à Londres ni dans les Royaumes de la Grande Bretagne pendant ces années il doit aussi avertir M. Gye avant la fin des années de 1861 et 1862—

[Woodford: Art 12. Si l'une des partiés venait à manquer à une des chôses du présent engagement et contract— le susdit contract deviendrait mit et de mit effait à partir du moment du manque d'execution.]

Par autorization de Monsieur Mario

John Woodford

April 23 1861

Appendix E

Gye's complaints about Costa's engagement

(Item 27 in Costa correspondence)

Jan 22 69

My dear Costa,

I received your letter accompanied by the draft of an engagement, as you propose it, the evening before last.

From what I told you at our last interview viz: on Jan 2nd respecting the junction of the two operas, particularly as to several of Mapleson's chorus being already engaged, also as to the intended engagement of other persons in his employ as well as the engagement of a second conductor, you will on reflection conclude that it would be impossible for me to sign the engagement which you have sent me.

If after having been together for so many years we are at last to part I should like that we both clearly see on what grounds we do so.

You do not state to me what are your objections to any one of the clauses in the engagement which I sent to you on the 14th instant but simply enclose to me a copy (almost verbatim) of your last year's engagement with one additional condition viz: a condition that you will give your services at Her Majesty's Theatre in case that I become lessee thereof, not taking into account the altered circumstances of the opera interests. [Costa's letter is not in this collection, but it is worth reviewing the contract in Appendix C in order to consider Gye's points.]

I will now go through all the clauses of the agreement which you have sent me & point out those to which I cannot agree.

No 1- As there is to be another conductor besides yourself it would not be convenient on all occasions for you to have to perform the duties of the *mise-en-scène* - with regard to your only giving your services at Her Majesty's Theatre in case of my becoming Lessee thereof, that would not be sufficient for I might not be legally considered the Lessee, altho' I may have the command of that theatre - As to you only being obliged to conduct on particular days you will see that in the engagement which I sent to you I left you the Exeter Hall evenings free-- besides it would, with two conductors, be often impossible to say on what other days your services might be necessary at the Theatre.

No 2- There would be no objection to this clause provided that such engagements as you might wish to accept did not interfere with your duties at the opera - As you may well suppose I cannot forget the Crystal Palace affair last year, when the attendance there of my entire orchestra most seriously affected the opera business for nearly a whole week, indeed I believe that we had not a single orchestra rehearsal & that in the very height of our season.

No 3- The salary you name is the same which I offered you - As to the dates of the payments I will make them as you desire.

No 4- There is no objection to this clause.

No 5- As there will now be a second conductor, much as I should have wished you to have conducted a new opera (should one be produced) I will yield this point altho' I am totally at a loss to understand, & I may say I have always been at a loss to understand how any musical conductor can ask for such a condition - with only one conductor I would ask what a manager could do in case of a refusal?

No 6- This clause can of course stand.

No 7- This clause may stand provided it be distinctly understood that I am not now the only person interested in the Royal Italian Opera.

No 8- This clause is un-necessary - I should of course cause your orders to be obeyed whenever I found it to my interest to do so.

No 9- I cannot agree to this clause - These persons knowing that I have no power over them would not always & on some occasions have not obeyed my orders & I will never again place myself in such a position, a position far too humiliating of the head of such an establishment as the Royal Italian Opera - You will not have forgotten that the Chorus some time ago absolutely refused to enter in their duties unless better conditions were given them, notwithstanding that they had all signed contracts for a term, two years of which were then still unexpired.

No 10- I never knew strangers to be present at Piano Forte rehearsals except the relations of the artistes - I never, as a rule, allow strangers to be present as you know, but still I will not place myself in a position to be debarred from taking a friend into the room should I at any time by chance wish to do so - Such a thing can hardly be expected.

No 11- I cannot agree to this clause - In the first place several of the chorus are already engaged & it is quite probably that some changes in the Covent Garden Orchestra might be made with advantage now that there will be two orchestras from which to choose; besides there is no reason why the same high salaries should always continue to be paid - The system which you have hitherto adopted of paying a certain salary for a certain instrumental position, no matter what the talent of the occupant may be is, in my opinion very unfair, besides in the event of the death or secession of a member of the orchestra his replacement should be engaged at as moderate a salary as possible and should not be paid a particular amount merely because his predecessor had received it - Such a system may be all very well when an opera has the support of an Imperial purse, as in France & Russia, but not, as in my case, when the whole enormous pecuniary responsibility rests on the shoulders of a private individual-

As to the orchestra having, as you wish, the right to make other engagements I can never again consent to the opera being made a secondary consideration - I have no objection to the members taking engagements which do not interfere with their duties at the opera,

but the interests of the opera must be paramount - I would rather engage an entirely fresh orchestra on the continent than submit to the loss and vexation which I have done.

No 12- Experience shows that this clause is useless - A director must for his own interest give proper notice.

No 13- There is no objection to this.

No 14- There is no objection to this except that the liberty to put an end to the agreement must be mutual.

I hope that I have made my intentions clear to you & also that you will feel that I ask nothing that is not most reasonable.

You know how much weight your recommendations, relative to your own department, always have had with me & altho' the form of the engagement which I have offered you may differ from the one which existed between us when I was alone in the management of the opera I still believe that very little difference of opinion would arise between us as to the personnel of the engagements - As to salaries I will never again consent to place the amount entirely out of my own control as I have hitherto done, indeed, having signed an agreement for the joint management of the theatre it now is impossible for me to do so - If there are any modifications in the engagement which I sent you that you desire, I shall be very happy to meet your views provided they do not affect the principles I have laid down - I venture however to hope that you will see the whole matter in the same light as I do & that you will, by signing & returning me the engagement which I sent you, unaltered, give me the pleasure of knowing that I am still to have the great advantage of your services..

Gye

P.S. I return you herewith the (stamped) engagement which you sent me.

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